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**Rural social enterprise: An exploration of hybridity
and engagement with place**

Thesis presented by
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for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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Declaration

This is to certify that the work I am submitting is my own and has not been submitted for another degree, either at University College Cork or elsewhere. All external references and sources are clearly acknowledged and identified within the contents. I have read and understood the regulations of University College Cork concerning plagiarism.

Mara van Twuijver

Kilfinane, February 2021

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Abstract

Rural social enterprises throughout Europe are found to fulfil needs of rural communities that are not met otherwise (van Twuijver *et al.*, 2020). Previous research shows that rural social enterprises are strongly embedded within their local communities, while at the same time connecting these to external actors and network (Richter, 2019). Furthermore, previous research shows that rural social enterprises operate from a wide and diverse resource base (O'Shaughnessy and O'Hara, 2016b). In this study, this resource base is understood as a hybrid resource base, given that resources from the private, public and third sector are combined (Doherty, Haugh and Lyon, 2014). In recent decades there is growing interest from policy, practice and academia in the role that rural social enterprises can play in realizing rural development (TFSSE, 2014; Richter *et al.*, 2020). Against this backdrop, this study set out to deepen our understanding of the way in which rural social enterprises operate within a rural context. Hitherto, empirical research into this has been scarce, leaving gaps in our understanding of how and through which mechanisms rural social enterprises are able to realize meaningful contributions to the places and communities they serve. In order to investigate this, two research questions have been formulated. The first question is focused on investigating which capabilities rural social enterprises develop in order to manage their hybrid resource base. The second research question is focused on how rural social enterprises engage with the rural context in which they operate.

A conceptual framework has been constructed that utilizes insights from Resource Orchestration Theory (ROT) and the human geographic concept of place. In combining the two theoretical perspectives, a framework emerged in which place is understood as a unique configuration of (potential) resources that rural social enterprises engage with as part of their hybrid resource portfolio. This framework has been utilized to conduct an in-depth qualitative case analysis of two rural social enterprises in Ireland. Data has been collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observations and archival document analysis. The data has been analysed using abductive analysis, anchored in a realist ontology.

The findings of this study outline five capabilities developed by rural social enterprises that support the orchestration of a hybrid resource portfolio, namely institutional connectivity, community connectivity, market connectivity, managing paradoxes and organisational adaptability, and describe the practices that underlie each of these

capabilities. Furthermore, the findings outline six forms of engagement with place, namely harnessing locational aspects for marketable activities; fostering a collective sense of place; (re)invigorating social connections; enhancing institutional relations; building on local human capital; and improving local material settings. The findings evidence that rural social enterprises do not only utilize economic means to fulfil their organisational objectives but show the importance of integrating these means with resources deriving from institutional and community sources. In describing five capabilities utilized to manage the hybrid resource portfolio, this study provides insight into the organisational processes and routines that enable the mobilization and integration of different resources in a rural setting. Moreover, the described capabilities support engagement with place because they provide the rural social enterprises with different approaches to access and mobilize elements of place as organisational resources. By utilizing elements of place as organisational resources, the rural social enterprises are found to alter/enhance these elements, and hence are not only influenced by, but also influence the rural context in which they operate. It is concluded that there is a mutually reinforcing link between the ability to manage a hybrid resource portfolio and engagement with place. Additionally, it is concluded that productively hybridizing resources originating from the private, public and third sector supports the ability of rural social enterprises to function in a rural context. Practically, the findings of this study show that a better understanding of the complex character of rural social enterprises is needed to fully realize their potential as a link in the chain of rural development.

Introduction

“For many years, social enterprises have provided a flexible and effective model which has delivered a positive response to social and societal issues - all the time working closely with local communities and individuals. As our society faces new challenges over the coming years, I believe that social enterprises can continue to identify and deliver new and innovative ways to address those challenges and create a sustainable and inclusive future for everyone.” Michael Ring TD (Irish Minister for Rural and Community Development 2017 – 2020 in DRCD, 2019).

The above quote is part of the foreword of the National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland (2019-2022), written by the (then) Minister for Rural and Community Development, Michel Ring TD. This policy, launched in 2019, is the first Irish Social Enterprise policy in history and marks a big step for the institutionalisation of social enterprise within Irish society. It is evidence of a more widespread growing interest in social enterprise around the globe (Kerlin, 2010; Morrison, Ramsey and Bond, 2017; Monroe-White and Zook, 2018). The quote also provides an insight into the expectations that surround these organisations. Social enterprises are linked to an ability to provide innovative, inclusive, and sustainable solutions to contemporary challenges (e.g. European Commission, 2015), one of which is the challenge to contribute to sustainable rural development (Eversole, Barraket and Luke, 2014; Richter *et al.*, 2020). It is this latter challenge that forms the backdrop of this study, which is focused on social enterprises operating in a rural setting.

Even though constant processes of urbanisation draw more and more people out of rural areas, these areas still form an important part of Europe, both in terms of the amount of people living there, and in terms of their function in our society. In Europe, approximately 29% of the population lives in a rural area and ‘the rural’ constitutes the majority of the European territory (Eurostat, 2020a). Furthermore, rural areas are of great importance for national development and well-being (Shucksmith and Brown, 2016). Most of the earth’s land and water is situated in rural areas, just as most of the earth’s plant and animal populations (Woods, 2010). Furthermore, rural areas are still the main production location of food, resources and (both fossil and sustainable) energy (Woods, 2010; Shucksmith and Brown, 2016). However, in the past decades, major changes have taken place in the agricultural landscape and in the flow of capital and labour (Van Huylenbroeck *et al.*, 2007; Horlings and Marsden, 2014). Where traditionally rural areas are linked to agricultural business and other primary

industries, nowadays, rural areas comprise of a diverse set of functions and activities (Brereton *et al.*, 2011), for example as places of leisure and tourism (Kneafsey, 2001; Halfacree, 2006). Changes in the production and consumption functions of rural areas not only have economic effects, but also affect the social fabric of these areas (Halfacree, 2006; Bosworth, 2012). All of this can cause complex challenges for rural areas across Europe, with each region experiencing this in its own unique way. Where some rural areas experience growth (Paquette and Domon, 2003), others are stuck in a downward circle of depopulation, diminishing economic activity, and weakening infrastructure (Bock, Kovacs and Shucksmith, 2014). For rural areas that deal with such downward spirals, rural development policies try to find a way to reverse these downward trends. In recent decades there is growing interest from policy, practice and academia in the role that rural social enterprises can play in this (Eversole, Barraket and Luke, 2014; TFSSE, 2014; Kim and Lim, 2017; Richter *et al.*, 2020).

Even though traditionally, rural areas are perceived as a harsh and unfavourable environment for entrepreneurial activities (Baumgartner, Pütz and Seidl, 2013), there is evidence that rural social enterprises have an ability to deal with these challenging circumstances (Jack and Anderson, 2002; Steinerowski, Jack and Farmer, 2008). Throughout Europe, rural social enterprises are found to provide a range of essential services to rural communities, including for example transportation and health care (O'Shaughnessy, Casey and Enright, 2011; Steinerowski and Woolvin, 2012; O'Shaughnessy and O'Hara, 2016b). Despite the growing interest in rural social enterprises as partners in creating sustainable rural development, gaps remain in our understanding of how these organisations operate (Munoz, Steiner and Farmer, 2015), with some authors characterising the field as “undeveloped” (Steiner and Teasdale, 2019, p. 152), and with “considerable research gaps” (Steiner, Farmer and Bosworth, 2019, p. 142). Therefore, the overall aim of this thesis is to provide an empirical exploration of how rural social enterprises are able to operate within a rural context. It does so by investigating two elements of rural social enterprises. First, it focuses on how these organisations manage the broad and diverse resource portfolio that previous research has defined as one of their key characteristics (van Twuijver *et al.*, 2020). Second, it investigates how rural social enterprises engage with the places in which they operate, in order to build an understanding of what elements of the rural context are utilized in their organisational operations. With these goals in mind, an in-depth

qualitative study has been conducted of two rural social enterprises operating in rural Ireland, of which this thesis presents the findings.

The remainder of this thesis is structured as follows. Chapter 1 provides a literature review on the topics addressed in this thesis and defines and justifies the research questions central to the empirical investigation. In chapter 2, the conceptual framework is presented and discussed. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the research design of the study, including a discussion on philosophy of science, methodology and data analysis. In chapter 4, a contextualisation is provided of rural social enterprises in an Irish setting. Furthermore, in this chapter, the two case organisations are introduced in detail. In chapter 5, the findings, resulting from the analysis of the empirical data, are presented. Chapter 6 consists of a discussion, including an overview of policy implications, limitations and suggestions for future research, and concludes this thesis.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

In this chapter, a literature review is provided describing the current academic discourse on rural social enterprises. This literature will be linked to the current debate on hybrid organisations. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section (section 1.1) provides an overview of both practice and academic perspectives on social enterprises in general. The second section (section 1.2) focuses on rural social enterprises in particular and describes evidence of their work, characteristics of these organisations and their link to the rural setting in which they operate. In the third section (section 1.3), an exploration of rural social enterprises as hybrid organisations is provided, drawing on literature from organisational hybridity.

1.1 An introduction to social enterprises

In practice, one sees that social enterprises can take a lot of different shapes and forms (Thompson and Doherty, 2006). Throughout Europe, social enterprises have developed a diverse set of activities in a wide range of sectors, ranging from agriculture and food processing, to tourism, arts and care (European Commission, 2020; European Commission, 2015). Besides this heterogeneous nature of activities developed, a wide range of organisational structures and legal forms is also observed. How a social enterprise is formed is not only influenced by the social mission and resources at hand (Mair and Martí, 2006), but also by the legal and institutional structures of a country or region (Kerlin, 2013; Young and Lecy, 2014). Different understandings of what a social enterprise is are influenced by, among others, national legal and institutional frameworks and differences in socio-economic conditions (Defourny and Nyssens, 2010; Gordon, 2013; Kerlin, 2013). Within Europe, the business models and legal forms of social enterprises differ greatly (Galera and Borzaga, 2009). Effort from the European Commission (2015; 2020) to map the status of social enterprises within the European territory confirms that there are national differences in legal forms across member countries. Even though there is a working definition of social enterprises on a European level¹, one can find significant variations in definitions and legal forms on a national level. In some countries (e.g. Belgium,

¹ The European Commission defines a social enterprise as “an operator in the social economy whose main objective is to have a social impact rather than make a profit for their owners or shareholders. It operates by providing goods and services for the market in an entrepreneurial and innovative fashion and uses its profits primarily to achieve social objectives. It is managed in an open and responsible manner and, in particular, involves employees, consumers and stakeholders affected by its commercial activities” (European Commission, 2011, p. 11).

Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia) there is a separate legal status for social enterprises.² Moreover, several countries (e.g. Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Greece, Hungary, Poland, Portugal and Spain) have integrated social enterprises in their cooperative or business law. Furthermore, throughout Europe, one can also find among others associations, foundations and companies limited by guarantee that fit into the EU-wide definition of a social enterprise. Some countries (e.g. Austria and Finland) employ a social enterprise mark or certification scheme, to aid to the visibility of social enterprises. All in all, one can see that there is a wide variety of ways in which social enterprises are defined and (in some countries) integrated into the national legal framework. Despite the fact that this big diversity in legal forms and organisational activities makes an actual estimate of the extent of a social enterprise ‘sector’ difficult, increasingly over the last decades, this diverse set of organisations is seen as potential contributors to a range of challenges of contemporary society (Nga and Shamuganathan, 2010; TFSSE, 2014; Wilson and Post, 2013; European Commission, 2020), one of which is the challenge to contribute to sustainable rural development (Eversole, Barraket and Luke, 2014; Richter *et al.*, 2020). However, before the focus will shift specifically to rural social enterprises, the next section will first explore different academic schools of thought and conceptualisations of social enterprises in general.

1.1.1 Academic perspectives on social enterprises

As shown in the section above, finding a universally accepted definition for a social enterprise is no easy task given the heterogenous nature of both the activities developed and the organisational forms utilized by social enterprises. Therefore, it is not surprising that a vast array of definitions of a social enterprise is in use in academia (Dacin, Dacin and Matear, 2010). This also reflects interest in social enterprise from a wide range of scholarly disciplines (e.g. entrepreneurship and organisational studies, sociology, economics, ethics) (Saebi, Foss and Linder, 2019). Table 1 provides an example of some of the different academic definitions used to describe social enterprises.

² It should be noted that for Lithuania and Slovakia, this legal status is narrowly focused on work integration social enterprises (WISEs).

Author(s)	Definition of social enterprise
Haugh (2006, pp. 183–184)	“Social enterprise is a collective term for a range of organisations that trade for a social purpose . They adopt one of a variety of different legal formats but in common the principle of pursuing business-led solutions to achieve social aims, and the reinvestment of surplus for community benefit. Their objectives focus on socially desired, nonfinancial goals and their outcomes are the nonfinancial measures of the implied demand for and supply of services.”
Thompson and Doherty (2006, p. 362)	“They have a social purpose ; Assets and wealth are used to create community benefit ; They pursue this with (at least in part) trade in a market place ; Profits and surpluses are not distributed to shareholders, as is the case with a profit-seeking business; ‘Members’ or employees have some role in decision making and/or governance; The enterprise is seen as accountable to both its members and a wider community ; There is either a double- or triple-bottom line paradigm; The assumption is that the most effective social enterprises demonstrate healthy financial and social returns – rather than high returns in one and lower returns in the other.”
Galera and Borzaga (2009, p. 215)	“ [...] social enterprises are conceived of as private, autonomous institutions that are engaged in the supply of services and goods with a merit or general-interest nature in a stable and continuous way .” “[...] the definition of social enterprise proposed excludes third sector organizations that do not carry out entrepreneurial activities and mainly perform advocacy or re-distributive functions, public institutions, and for profit enterprises engaged in social projects.”
Madill, Brouard and Hebb (2010, p. 141)	“ [...] organisations created to pursue social missions or purposes that operate to create community benefit regardless of ownership or legal structure and with various degrees of financial self-sufficiency, innovation and social transformation ”.
Kerlin (2013, p. 84)	“Defined as the use of nongovernmental, market-based approaches to address social issues , social enterprise often

	provides a ‘business’ source of revenue for many types of socially oriented organizations and activities.”
McMullen (2018, p. 576)	“Social enterprises exemplify a form of hybrid organisation combining features of multiple organisational forms (Haveman and Rao, 2006; Hoffman, Badiane and Haigh, 2012; Jay, 2013) – here an amalgamation of the traditional charity and business forms that seeks to reconcile multiple identities, sources of funding, and objectives (Battilana and Lee, 2014).”
Ridley-Duff and Bull (2019, p. 97)	“Social enterprise is a useful umbrella term for any (democratic) organisational form or activity where ‘people are not in it for the money ’ but still generate a financial surplus.”

Table 1: Different academic definitions of social enterprise.

Among the different definitions in use by academics, two common themes can be distinguished (Doherty, Haugh and Lyon, 2014; Saebi, Foss and Linder, 2019). The first is the pursuit of social value for or together with beneficiaries. Social enterprises are driven by a strong social mission and pursue goals related to the benefit of a specific place, community or the general interest (Haugh, 2006; Thompson and Doherty, 2006). Some social enterprises are aimed at creating value directly for beneficiaries, while there is also a group of social enterprises (e.g. work integration social enterprises) that actively include beneficiaries in their organisational models (Saebi, Foss and Linder, 2019). The second theme common across academic definitions of social enterprise is related to the integration of both social and economic value (Thompson and Doherty, 2006; Saebi, Foss and Linder, 2019). Many definitions of social enterprise include an aspect of trading or commercial activity to generate income. Hence, social enterprises pursue their goal by (at least partial) market-based activities. This makes that they have to integrate different forms of value creation within their organisation (Doherty, Haugh and Lyon, 2014; McMullen, 2018).

In general, a social enterprise can be understood as an organisation that pursues a social mission by using trading activities (Peredo and McLean, 2006; Dacin, Dacin and Matear, 2010; Saebi, Foss and Linder, 2019). The main aim of their endeavours is not to create private wealth or wealth for shareholders, but to create wealth for society, either in the form of a place, community, society at large or the environment (Mair and Martí, 2006; Doherty, Haugh and Lyon, 2014). Different academic schools

of thought have developed around the concept of social enterprise, three of which will be discussed in the following section.

1.1.1.1 Various academic schools of thought

Despite the general idea that social enterprises pursue a social mission through (among others) market-based activities, various academic schools of thought have a different understanding of what constitutes a social enterprise. Within the global north, three main schools of thought can be distinguished (Defourny and Nyssens, 2010, 2014; Bacq and Janssen, 2011).³ The US-Anglo-Saxon tradition has brought forward the Social Innovation School and Social Enterprise School, while the European EMES network⁴ has developed a third understanding.

In the Social Innovation School, emphasis is put on social entrepreneurs, who are seen as ‘heroic individuals’ and the individual agents of change (Leadbeater, 1997; Galera and Borzaga, 2009). Dees (1998) describes these individuals as driven by a strong social mission who are continuously learning and innovating and are able to recognise and pursue opportunities. In this, they are not held back by the resources currently available and they are highly accountable to the beneficiaries of their activities. Social entrepreneurs establish social enterprises to create innovative solutions to pressing social issues (Leadbeater, 1997). The transformation of society through innovation and scaling of social enterprises are central elements in this school of thought (Alvord, Brown and Letts, 2004). In this line of thinking, social enterprises can adopt a wide range of legal forms, ranging from non-profit charities to commercial businesses with social objectives (Kramer, 2005; Mair and Martí, 2006).

The Social Enterprises School places emphasis on commercial earned-income strategies used by social enterprises. This line of reasoning finds its roots in the commercialization of non-profit organisations (Young, Salamon and Grinsfelder, 2002; Galera and Borzaga, 2009) but has broadened to include different types of organisational forms (including for-profit organisations) involved in trading with a

³ The three schools of thought discussed here represent a global north perspective on social enterprise. It is acknowledged that in other parts of the world, e.g. Africa, Latin America and Asia, different perspectives have been developed, for example those that link social enterprises to the social and solidarity economy (see for example Coraggio *et al.* (2015) and Eynaud *et al.* (2019)). However, discussing these perspectives is outside the scope of this thesis.

⁴ EMES (EMergence des Entreprises Sociale en Europe) is a European Research Network comprised of university research centers and individual researchers on Social Economy, Social Innovation and Social Enterprise. For further information see: www.emes.net.

social purpose. According to this school, social enterprises can generate a profit, of which some part is reinvested in the social mission and some part might be distributed to the shareholders of the organisation (Austin, Stevenson and Wei-Skillern, 2006; Yunus, 2010).

A third school of thought is established by the European research network EMES. They place social enterprises in a practice of cooperative social action (Defourny, 2001; Defourny and Nyssens, 2006), thus putting emphasis on the collective and participatory dimensions of social enterprises (Ridley-Duff, 2007; Galera and Borzaga, 2009). Social enterprises are perceived as collective organisations with a democratic governance structure, that combine social and economic elements while operating within the third sector (Borzaga and Defourny, 2001). This school of thought draws on work from Pestoff (1992) to conceptualise the third sector as a place in which guiding principles from the private, public and voluntary sectors are combined to offer a variety of services through a range of organisations, including co-operatives, associations and social enterprises. Social enterprises distinguish themselves from other organisations in the third sector by their innovative way of utilizing resources and addressing social issues (Defourny and Nyssens, 2014).

1.1.1.2 From a spectrum to a cross-sectoral understanding of social enterprise

Next to the three different schools of thought described above, two different general conceptualisations of social enterprises can be distinguished within academia: those that place social enterprises on a spectrum ranging from economic to social activities, and those that understand social enterprises as a cross-sectoral phenomenon. In the former conceptualisation, different authors propose that on a continuum ranging from a pure focus on social mission to a pure focus on commercial activities, social enterprises can be found somewhere in the middle (Dees and Elias, 1998; Mair and Martí, 2006; Alter, 2007). The exact place of a social enterprise on the continuum is likely to vary between individual organisations, given that each organisation will find a distinct balance between their social and economic activities (Young and Lecy, 2014). However, in general, this conceptualisation understands social enterprises as organisations that must make a trade-off between an economic or a social gain (Seanor *et al.*, 2013; Young and Lecy, 2014). A downside of plotting social enterprises on a

two-dimensional spectrum is that this conceptualisation allows little room to explore the boundaries between social enterprises and non-profit organisations on the one hand, and social enterprises and for-profit businesses on the other (Peredo and McLean, 2006; Defourny and Nyssens, 2017; Ridley-Duff and Bull, 2019). Moreover, it doesn't recognize partnerships and collaborations between different organisational entities belonging to different economic sectors (Young and Lecy, 2014). It provides limited space to explore the different levels of complexity, ambiguity, and paradox that social enterprises have to deal with (Seanor *et al.*, 2013).

A conceptualisation that is more sensitive to this complexity is one that understands social enterprises as a cross-sectoral phenomenon (Leadbeater, 1997; Ridley-Duff and Bull, 2019). In this conceptualisation, social enterprises are understood as organisations that merge different guiding principles (Pestoff, 1992; Defourny and Nyssens, 2017) or logics (Doherty, Haugh and Lyon, 2014) corresponding to different economic sectors. They combine resources, structures, and practices from the private, public and third sector (Leadbeater, 1997)⁵. Within this line of thinking, some scholars place social enterprises within the third sector (Borzaga and Defourny, 2001; Defourny and Nyssens, 2014), whilst others see these organisations as emerging across all three sectors, hence acknowledging a wider variety of organisational forms and partnerships within the social enterprise sphere (Leadbeater, 1997; Billis, 2010b; Ridley-Duff and Bull, 2019).

In this study, the conceptualisation of social enterprise as emerging at the intersection of different sectors is followed (see Figure 1). Hence, it is acknowledged that social enterprises are organisations that, one way or another, merge elements from the different economic sectors, making them "a combination of various actors, logics of action and resources" (Defourny and Nyssens, 2014, p. 11). This conceptualisation of social enterprises is of importance for the understanding of rural social enterprises as hybrid organisations that will be developed later in this chapter.

⁵ A more detailed description of the ideal type characteristics of these three economic sectors is provided in chapter 2, section 2.1.1.

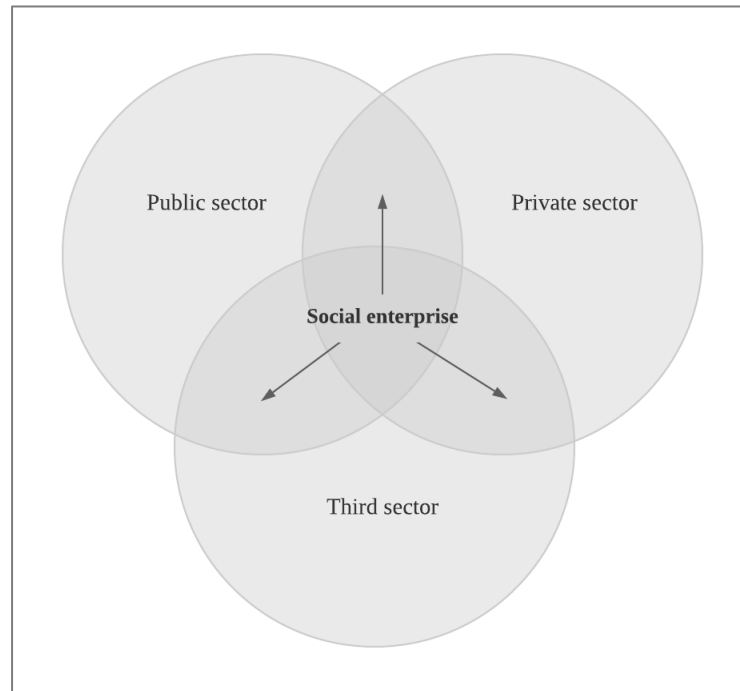


Figure 1: Social enterprise as cross-sectoral phenomenon.
Based on Billis (2010).

1.1.2 Summary

In the first section of this chapter, the concept of social enterprise has been explored from the point of view of both practice and academia. A broad range of definitions and organisational forms were found. It has been established that social enterprises can be broadly understood as organisations whose main aim is not to create private wealth or wealth for shareholders, but to create value for society, either in the form of a place, community, society at large or the environment (Mair and Martí, 2006; Doherty, Haugh and Lyon, 2014; Saebi, Foss and Linder, 2019). In this, social enterprises can be understood as organisations that combine different forms of value creation in one organisation (Thompson and Doherty, 2006; McMullen, 2018; Saebi, Foss and Linder, 2019) and operate across the boundaries of different economic sectors (Leadbeater, 1997; Defourny and Nyssens, 2014; Ridley-Duff and Bull, 2019).

This section has also brought forward that social enterprises are increasingly seen as potential contributors to a range of challenges of contemporary society (Nga and Shamuganathan, 2010; Wilson and Post, 2013; TFSSE, 2014; European Commission, 2015), among others the challenge to contribute to sustainable rural development (Eversole, Barraket and Luke, 2014; Richter *et al.*, 2020). In this thesis, rural social enterprises form the main point of focus. Therefore, in the next section of this chapter,

stock is taken of our current understanding of rural social enterprises and knowledge gaps are formulated that will guide the remainder of this thesis.

1.2 Rural social enterprises

Both academia and practice increasingly acknowledge the role rural social enterprises can play in the development of rural areas (Eversole, Barraket and Luke, 2014; Kim and Lim, 2017; Richter *et al.*, 2020). However, even though the academic field of social entrepreneurship is growing rapidly, the field of rural social enterprise enquiry is still relatively young (Rey-Martí, Ribeiro-Soriano and Palacios-Marqués, 2016; Steiner and Teasdale, 2019; van Twuijver *et al.*, 2020), with some authors characterizing our current understanding of these rural organisations as “largely scattered and undeveloped” (Steiner and Teasdale, 2019, p. 152; Munoz, Steiner and Farmer, 2015). Steiner, Farmer and Bosworth (2019, p. 142) state that “rural social enterprise is a widespread response to public sector retrenchment, but it [...] requires better evidence and policy to make it work”. Thus, it seems timely to investigate rural social enterprises and the dynamics under which they operate. To do so, this section will first explore evidence of the activities undertaken by rural social enterprises before it moves on to a discussion of the characteristics of these organisations. After that, a reflection will be provided on the link between rural social enterprises and the rural context in which they operate, among others by connecting rural social enterprises to contemporary ideas of rural development.

1.2.1 Evidence of social enterprises in rural areas

Empirical evidence of social enterprises operating in rural areas confirms that these organisations have developed a diverse range of activities (van Twuijver *et al.*, 2020). They are found to provide both necessary infrastructures (Lorendahl, 1996; Aiken, Taylor and Moran, 2016) and (basic) services that otherwise would not be available in the rural localities they serve (van Twuijver *et al.*, 2020). Rural social enterprises are found to be active in a broad set of sectors, ranging from health care (O’Shaughnessy and O’Hara, 2016b), elder care (Steinerowski and Woolvin, 2012; O’Shaughnessy and O’Hara, 2016b), transportation (O’Shaughnessy, Casey and Enright, 2011) and community shops (Calderwood and Davies, 2012; O’Shaughnessy and O’Hara, 2016b) to the energy (Jacuniak-Suda and Mose, 2014; Okkonen and Lehtonen, 2016), broadband (Wallace *et al.*, 2015) and leisure (Vestrum, 2014) sector.

The contributions to rural areas attributed to rural social enterprises are of a diverse nature, including social, economic and environmental impacts. First of all, rural social enterprises are found to create social impact by providing necessary social services (O'Shaughnessy, Casey and Enright, 2011; O'Shaughnessy and O'Hara, 2016b; Macaulay *et al.*, 2018). They are, furthermore, found to promote capacity building and empower vulnerable social groups (Gordon, 2002; O'Shaughnessy, Casey and Enright, 2011; Macaulay *et al.*, 2018). There is evidence that rural social enterprises positively impact the social capital of rural communities (Evans and Syrett, 2007; Morrison, Ramsey and Bond, 2017) and the quality of relationships among different groups within a community (Lorendahl, 1996; Mestres and Lien, 2017; Steiner and Teasdale, 2019). Second of all, rural social enterprises are found to contribute to economic development, among others through job creation (Lorendahl, 1996; Dayson, 2013; Jacuniak-Suda and Mose, 2014), in some cases for groups with a distance to the labour market (O'Shaughnessy, 2008; Róbert and Levente, 2017). Moreover, economic benefits related to affordable housing, the continuity/creation of necessary infrastructures and business development supports have been linked to the activities of rural social enterprise (Lorendahl, 1996; Gordon, 2002; Dayson, 2013). Last but not least, these enterprises have been found to contribute to environmental goals, among others by initiating renewable energy initiatives (Okkonen and Lehtonen, 2016) and by undertaking activities related to environmental care (e.g. through recycling, conservation or the increase of biodiversity) and environmental awareness (e.g. through the development and execution of educational programs) (Jacuniak-Suda and Mose, 2014; Thomas Lane *et al.*, 2016). As pointed out by Jacuniak-Suda and Mose (2014, p. 37), the work delivered by rural social enterprises is “not only limited to one aspect (economic, social or environmental) but covers mainly two or three dimensions concurrently”. This integration of different values is acknowledged by several authors (e.g. Gordon, 2002; Sonnino and Griggs-Trevarthen, 2013; Lebe, Peric and Djurkin, 2014; Okkonen and Lehtonen, 2016; Thomas Lane *et al.*, 2016). Rural social enterprises seem to be able to make novel combinations of resources, capital and knowledge in order to contribute to solutions for the complex challenges rural areas face (Anderson, 2000; Steinerowski and Steinerowska-Streb, 2012; Steiner, Farmer and Bosworth, 2019). In the next section the characteristics of rural social enterprises that enable them to achieve this will be explored.

1.2.2 Characteristics of rural social enterprises

Two main characteristics of rural social enterprises can be distilled from previous research. A systematic literature review from van Twuijver *et al.* (2020), based on 66 empirical studies of European rural social enterprises, reveals an ability to bring together and manage a wide range of resources. Furthermore, this review shows that rural social enterprises have a strong local focus, and often aim to fulfil community needs. Both characteristics will be discussed in more detail below.

Previous research shows that rural social enterprises possess an ability to combine and manage a wide range of resources. This includes among others a combination of income generated through market-based activities, public funding streams and philanthropic sources (Perry and Alcock, 2010; O'Shaughnessy and O'Hara, 2016b; Smith and McColl, 2016); the integration of efforts from paid staff and volunteers (Wallace *et al.*, 2015); and the mobilisation and management of both local and extra-local resources (Vestrum, Rasmussen and Carter, 2017; Lang and Fink, 2019; Richter, 2019). Barraket *et al.* (2019, p. 189) show that in combining a diverse range of resources, rural social enterprises poses "resourcefulness", which they define as "the way [in which] entrepreneurs generate value in resource-constrained environments".

An important way to mobilize and maintain such a wide and diverse resource base is through interaction with a diversified group of stakeholders, including among others private sector and third sector organisations, public authorities and local community members (Liddle, McElwee and Disney, 2012; O'Shaughnessy and O'Hara, 2016b; Đurkin and Perić, 2017), both within formal and informal networks (Haugh, 2007). The utilization of local resources in the enterprise seems to be stronger in rural social enterprises than in those operating in urban areas. Smith and McColl (2016) and Barraket *et al.* (2019) both compare urban and rural social enterprises in their study; Smith and McColl (2016) in a Scottish setting, and Barraket *et al.* (2019) in an Australian setting. Both studies analyse the resource mobilisation patterns of urban and rural social enterprises and both show that in mobilizing resources, rural social enterprises focus more on assets and resources available within their local community than their urban counterparts. At the same time, it has to be acknowledged that rural social enterprises don't just rely on local resources alone. There is evidence that these enterprises mobilize resources through networks outside of their locality at a regional, national and international level (Vestrum, Rasmussen and Carter, 2017; Lang and

Fink, 2019). By mobilizing resources across a diverse set of networks and from different spatial scales, rural social enterprises can bridge between local and external actors. Richter (2019, p. 2) describes these organisations as being “embedded intermediaries”, meaning they are firmly embedded in the locality they serve but are also connected to broader networks outside of that locality. Consequently, they have the ability to connect rural areas, socially, spatially and culturally, with actors and groups that would otherwise not be connected (Müller and Korsgaard, 2018; Lang and Fink, 2019; Richter, 2019).

The above paragraph already shows the importance for rural social enterprises to be embedded within their local communities. This relates to the second characteristic of rural social enterprises distinguished in literature, namely the fact that rural social enterprises have a strong local focus (van Twuijver *et al.*, 2020). They often address community needs and promote local involvement in their enterprise (Eversole, Barraket and Luke, 2014; Vestrum, 2014; Steiner, Farmer and Bosworth, 2019). In their comparative studies Smith and McColl (2016) and Barraket *et al.* (2019) confirm that rural social enterprises are more reliant on community involvement in the operations of their organisation than their urban counterparts. Furthermore, Smith and McColl (2016) find that rural social enterprises are characterised by a stronger link between the organisation and the local identity of a community than urban social enterprises. They emphasize that rural social enterprises are run by and for local people, and community involvement is an important part of the operations of these organisations. Whereas the urban social enterprises in their study were more aimed at benefiting disadvantaged individuals or groups of which those involved in running the organisation were not necessarily a part. For rural social enterprise local involvement is a way of gaining legitimacy within the community they serve and, as already discussed previously, it enables the mobilisation of different types of resources (Cooney *et al.*, 2008; Vestrum and Rasmussen, 2013; Valchovska and Watts, 2016; Vestrum, Rasmussen and Carter, 2017). However, high levels of embeddedness can also result in “over-embeddedness” (Welter, 2011, p. 171). In that case local ties start to impede with an organisation’s ability to change (Jack and Anderson, 2002; Vestrum, 2014; Steiner and Atterton, 2015).

One way in which rural social enterprises create local involvement is through the inclusion of local volunteers in their operations. Several studies refer to the importance

of the time and expertise from local volunteers, both in the establishment and the running of the social enterprise (Haugh, 2007; Farmer, Steinerowski and Jack, 2008; Perry and Alcock, 2010; Calderwood and Davies, 2012; Ludvig *et al.*, 2018). Here, it should be mentioned that even though volunteers are of great importance for these organisations, it is also recognized that there are drawbacks to a heavy reliance on them. Tension with paid members of staff, limited growth potential of the organisation and limited innovative capacity are mentioned by previous research as potential downsides (Calderwood and Davies, 2012; Sonnino and Griggs-Trevarthen, 2013). Furthermore, continuous volunteering can also be a burden on smaller (rural) populations, leading to burn-out and volunteer-fatigue among volunteers (Wyper, Whittam and de Ruyter, 2016; Kelly *et al.*, 2019). All in all, previous research shows that rural social enterprises rely heavily on local involvement, but that it is important to find the right balance between using this to mobilise resources to create local solutions and gaining legitimacy on the one hand, and maintaining goodwill and innovative capacity on the other hand.

Overall, the above discussion on rural social enterprises shows that two main characteristics of these organisations, namely their ability to mobilize and manage a wide range of resources and a strong local focus, are related to each other. Combining these characteristics enables rural social enterprises to come up with solutions for the challenges they face and makes them able to provide essential infrastructures and services in rural areas. The characteristics described above show that in order to achieve their objectives rural social enterprises actively combine organisational elements belonging to different economic sectors (Eversole, Barraket and Luke, 2014; Steiner and Teasdale, 2019). They combine principles from the public sector (e.g. focus on common good, use of public funding), the private sector (e.g. trading income through sales of products and services in a competitive market) and the third sector (e.g. voluntary labour) into one organisation. This makes rural social enterprises complex organisations that deal with different expectations, values and logics within their organisation (Anderson and Lent, 2017). Organisations that combine principles from different economic sectors can be considered ‘hybrid organisations’ (Billis, 2010a; Doherty, Haugh and Lyon, 2014). Social enterprises in general are perceived as ideal type hybrid organisations (Battilana and Lee, 2014; Doherty, Haugh and Lyon,

2014; Anderson and Lent, 2017; Bauwens, Huybrechts and Dufays, 2020), with Saebi *et al.* (2019, p. 20) stating that hybridity is “an essential criterion” of social enterprises.

Organisational hybridity in general is found to be able to increase creativity and innovative capacity within an organisation (Dalpiaz, Rindova and Ravasi, 2016; Vickers *et al.*, 2017; Kokko, 2018) and, based on the characteristics of rural social enterprises as described above, seems to be a key element of the way in which rural social enterprises work. In section 3 of this chapter, the concept of organisational hybridity will be explored in more detail. However, in order to better understand the dynamics in which rural social enterprises operate, the next section will first explore how the rural context influences the development and activities of rural social enterprises.

1.2.3 The importance of the ‘rural’ in rural social enterprise

It is generally acknowledged in literature on (rural) enterprise that context matters for entrepreneurial activities (Steyaert and Katz, 2004; Autio *et al.*, 2014; Zahra, Wright and Abdelgawad, 2014; Korsgaard, Müller and Tanvig, 2015; Gaddefors and Anderson, 2019). Organisations do not develop in isolation but are shaped through interaction with factors in their environment (Welter, 2011; Skerratt, 2012; Gaddefors and Anderson, 2019). Local conditions, made up of among others institutional structures (Kerlin, 2013), available resources (Mair and Martí, 2006) and spatial characteristics (Müller and Korsgaard, 2018) all influence entrepreneurial decision making (Müller, 2016).

Rural areas are traditionally perceived to constitute a harsh and unfavourable environment for entrepreneurs (Baumgartner, Pütz and Seidl, 2013). Small local markets and weak institutional frameworks, combined with a dispersed population and limited access to among others human, social and financial capital put constraints on the development of entrepreneurship in regions like this (Steinerowski and Steinerowska-Streb, 2012; Munoz, Steiner and Farmer, 2015; Steiner and Atterton, 2015; Müller, 2016). On the other hand, there is evidence that suggests that entrepreneurs in rural areas can benefit from unique resources like for example strong local networks, a culture of self-help and a tradition of civic participation (Steinerowski and Steinerowska-Streb, 2012; Munoz, Steiner and Farmer, 2015; Muñoz and Kimmitt, 2019). Moreover, distinctive resources such as heritage and local

culture can also provide unique opportunities for entrepreneurial activities (Anderson, 2000; Müller, 2016). Hence, the rural context provides both enabling and constraining factors for the development of rural social enterprises. Steinerowski and Steinerowska-Streb (2012) maintain that the market context (e.g. a lack of competitors), a culture of self-help and volunteer effort, support from the local community, and the small size of an enterprise (making management easier) are elements that benefit social enterprise development within rural areas. Yet, these authors find unfavourable geographic characteristics (related to isolation and increased transportation costs), limited access to suitable staff and to finance, the small size of the potential sales market, policy ambiguity and a lack of tailor-made policy support to challenge development of rural social enterprises.

Previous research points to the role of policy (Farmer, Steinerowski and Jack, 2008; Steinerowski and Steinerowska-Streb, 2012; Smith and McColl, 2016; Mazzei and Roy, 2017), relationships with support organisations and other institutional partners (Gordon, 2002; Liddle, McElwee and Disney, 2012; Wallace *et al.*, 2015; O'Shaughnessy and O'Hara, 2016b), formal and informal networks within and outside the community served (Vestrum, 2014; Vestrum, Rasmussen and Carter, 2017; Richter, 2019) and physical elements of the rural surrounding (Steinerowski, Jack and Farmer, 2008; Steinerowski and Steinerowska-Streb, 2012) as important elements in shaping rural social enterprises. By having a strong focus on local needs, rural social enterprises are rooted in the places they serve (Munoz, 2010; Eversole, Barraket and Luke, 2014). As discussed previously, this does not mean that these organisations are place-bound (Eversole, Barraket and Luke, 2014). There is ample evidence that rural social enterprises bridge between local and non-local networks and resources (Vestrum, Rasmussen and Carter, 2017; Müller and Korsgaard, 2018; Lang and Fink, 2019; Richter, 2019). Yet, the focus on local needs (Shaw and Carter, 2007; Yitshaki and Kropp, 2016) and an intimate familiarity with local conditions (Jack and Anderson, 2002; Korsgaard, Ferguson and Gaddefors, 2015) provides rural social enterprises with the ability to create place-specific solutions to local challenges. Lang and Fink (2019, p. 158) argue that “the concept of rural social enterprise is inherently linked to place”. Hence, the rural environment is “not just a residual factor but a core issue that shapes the role and form of rural social enterprises” (van Twuijver *et al.*, 2020, p. 135).

Even though rural areas have structural characteristics that possibly impede, challenge or restrict entrepreneurial activity, rural social enterprises have developed an ability to deal with these circumstances (Jack and Anderson, 2002; Steinerowski, Jack and Farmer, 2008; Gaddefors and Anderson, 2019). This is confirmed by research that shows that rural social enterprises possess an “adaptive capacity” that enables these organisations to work alongside the challenges that are inherent to their rural context (Steinerowski and Steinerowska-Streb, 2012, p. 178; Steiner, Farmer and Bosworth, 2019). Yet, what constitutes such an adaptive capacity is not clearly understood yet. Previous research concerning the role of the environment on entrepreneurial activity shows that it is the way in which enterprises *engage* with their environment and the resources that it provides that shapes entrepreneurial activity and outcomes (Anderson, 2000; McKeever, Anderson and Jack, 2014; Müller and Korsgaard, 2018). Engagement can be understood as the process of actively utilizing contextual factors in organisational endeavours (Müller and Korsgaard, 2018; Gaddefors and Anderson, 2019). Gaddefors and Anderson (2019) conceptualise the rural context as a pool of resources, some of which obvious and some latent. Through engaging with these resources (e.g. by mobilizing and combining them), rural social enterprises create value. This shows a reciprocal relationship between rural social enterprises and their environment, meaning that a rural social enterprise is likely to be shaped by factors in its environment (e.g. the resources available), while at the same time the enterprise will contribute to change in this environment (e.g. through altering the local resource base) (Anderson and Starnawska, 2008; Hindle, 2010; Zahra, Wright and Abdelgawad, 2014; Müller, 2016; Gaddefors and Anderson, 2019). This ability to generate positive change in the rural context is what makes rural social enterprises interesting partners in rural development processes, something the next section will explore in more detail.

1.2.4 Rural development and rural social enterprises

In this section, the link between rural social enterprises and contemporary ideas of rural development is explored. This is done to contextualize the current policy interest in rural social enterprises and to strengthen the argument that it is timely and relevant to expand our (empirical and academic) understanding of these organisations.

Contemporary ideas on rural development acknowledge that not all rural areas are the same. It is recognized that different social, cultural, geographic, and institutional

characteristics of a place give rise to different opportunities for development (Gkartzios and Lowe, 2019; Bosworth *et al.*, 2020). According to the principles of neo-endogenous development, connecting local resources and actors with extra-local ones is key in maximizing the potential of local assets (Atterton *et al.*, 2011; Saleminck and Strijker, 2016). Thus, in order to utilize local opportunities, both local and external knowledge and resources need to be mobilised (Gkartzios and Lowe, 2019).

It is recognized that entrepreneurship in general can be beneficial for regional development (Pike, Rodríguez-Pose and Tomaney, 2007; Müller, 2016; Bosworth *et al.*, 2020). Entrepreneurs are able to levitate the current value of resources to a new, higher market value (Anderson, 2000; Bosworth and Atterton, 2012; Müller, 2016) and are able to adjust their activities to local needs (Stöhr, 1990; Haugh, 2007). Rural social enterprises are found to address the needs of certain geographical areas (Munoz, Steiner and Farmer, 2015; Kim and Lim, 2017; Richter, 2019) and fill gaps in service provision left by the state and/or the market (Farmer, Steinerowski and Jack, 2008; Hulgård, 2011).

Furthermore, characteristics of rural social enterprises align with the contemporary ideas on rural development as described above (Baumgartner, Pütz and Seidl, 2013; Steiner, Farmer and Bosworth, 2019). Their focus on local needs (Shaw and Carter, 2007; Yitshaki and Kropp, 2016), their ability to integrate economic, social and/or environmental value creation (Sonnino and Griggs-Trevarthen, 2013; Jacuniak-Suda and Mose, 2014; Thomas Lane *et al.*, 2016) and the mobilization and management of a wide range of local and extra-local resources and stakeholders (Vestrum, 2014; Richter, 2019; Steiner and Teasdale, 2019) all feed into their ability to generate value in rural areas.

Furthermore, previous research suggests that rural social enterprises are “aligned with features of traditional rural life” (Steiner, Farmer and Bosworth, 2019, p. 140), such as civic participation and a culture of self-help (Steinerowski and Steinerowska-Streb, 2012; Munoz, Steiner and Farmer, 2015), and that they possess an intimate knowledge of their rural localities and the resources contained in it (Korsgaard, Ferguson and Gaddefors, 2015). Because they are rooted in their local environment (Munoz, 2010; Eversole, Barraket and Luke, 2014), they can fully grasp the manifesting needs and create local support to design and implement solutions to these (Steiner and Teasdale,

2019; Steiner, Farmer and Bosworth, 2019). Moreover, they are recognized for their ability to access and use (underutilized) local knowledge and resources (Di Domenico, Haugh and Tracey, 2010). In combining these local resources with resources mobilized outside their local area, they create connections between local, regional, national and international levels, and between public and private partners. They actively bridge between different local and external networks and actors (Vestrum, Rasmussen and Carter, 2017; Müller and Korsgaard, 2018; Lang and Fink, 2019; Richter, 2019). These characteristics match well with the ideas of combining local knowledge and resources with those accessed through external networks as postulated by contemporary principles of neo-endogenous rural development (Gkartzios and Lowe, 2019; Steiner, Farmer and Bosworth, 2019; Bosworth *et al.*, 2020).

However, as highlighted before in this chapter, despite the acknowledged potential of rural social enterprises to contribute to development of rural areas by both policy makers (TFSSE, 2014; European Commission, 2016; CEIS, 2019) and academics (Farmer, Steinerowski and Jack, 2008; Eversole, Barraket and Luke, 2014; Jacuniak-Suda and Mose, 2014; Morrison and Ramsey, 2019; Richter *et al.*, 2020), gaps remain in our understanding of how rural social enterprises operate (Munoz, Steiner and Farmer, 2015; Steiner and Teasdale, 2019; Steiner, Farmer and Bosworth, 2019). As Steiner and Teasdale (2019, p. 152) conclude: “social enterprise offers an approach to rural development that brings together elements of voluntary sector, public sector and mainstream business”. In section 1.2.2 of this chapter, this integration of different sectoral elements was linked to organisational hybridity. Even though hybridity is acknowledged as a key element of rural social enterprises, research on how rural social enterprises are able to utilize this organisational hybridity, and how it influences their engagement with the rural localities which they serve, hitherto remains scarce (Anderson and Lent, 2017).

1.2.5 Summary

Rural social enterprises are increasingly linked to the creation of sustainable rural development (Eversole, Barraket and Luke, 2014; TFSSE, 2014; European Commission, 2016; Kim and Lim, 2017; Richter *et al.*, 2020). In section 1.2.1 evidence was presented that confirms that social enterprises based in rural areas are able to fulfil needs that are not met otherwise. In section 1.2.2 the characteristics of rural social enterprises were explored and it was found that these organisations operate

from a diversified resource base. In doing so, they combine principles from different economic sectors and thus can be understood as hybrid organisations. Furthermore, rural social enterprises are strongly embedded within their local community and promote the involvement of local community members in their enterprise. Simultaneously, they connect to external actors and networks, thus creating bridges between local and non-local actors, networks and markets. In section 1.2.3 it was established that there is a reciprocal relationship between rural social enterprises and their rural context, in which both influence each other. Active engagement with the rural context was discussed as an important way in which rural social enterprises can enhance the value of local resources. In section 1.2.4 it was explored how the characteristics of rural social enterprises are aligned to contemporary ideas on rural development, confirming that these enterprises indeed have the potential to be partners in creating sustainable rural development. However, as highlighted throughout this chapter, our understanding of the way in which rural social enterprises operate remains limited (Steiner and Teasdale, 2019; Steiner, Farmer and Bosworth, 2019), making it timely to investigate rural social enterprise and the context in which they operate. As brought forward in this chapter, their hybrid character, which is among others reflected in the wide and diverse resource base originating from different economic sectors, is recognized as a key feature of rural social enterprises, yet remains largely underexplored (Anderson and Lent, 2017). Therefore, the following section of this chapter will focus on the concept of organisational hybridity and will bring together the discussion so far in order to propose the research questions that will guide empirical data collection.

1.3 Rural social enterprises as hybrid organisations

As brought forward in the previous two sections of this chapter, the fact that rural social enterprises combine organisational elements from different economic sectors is recognized as a key characteristic of these organisations. In this final section of this chapter, the concept of organisational hybridity will be discussed (section 1.3.1), after which hybridity within rural social enterprises will be explored (section 1.3.2). Finally, the discussion so far will be brought together in order to formulate the research questions (section 1.3.3) that will guide empirical data collection and analysis. This chapter will close with a summary of the discussion so far (section 1.3.4).

1.3.1 Organisational hybridity

Being a hybrid refers to something that is a mixture of different species (Cambridge Dictionary, 2018, hybrid entry). The term is used in very different settings, for example in biology, where it refers to a plant or animal that is a result of the crossing of two different types of species; in mechanics, where a hybrid vehicle is able to utilize a combination of two different fuel types; or in linguistics, where it relates to words that are derived from two different languages⁶. In organisation and management literature, the term ‘hybrid organisation’ is used to refer to organisations that combine different objectives and/or that span different sectoral boundaries (Doherty, Haugh and Lyon, 2014; Castellás, Stubbs and Ambrosini, 2019).

Different definitions on organisational hybridity and hybrid organisations can be found. Billis (2013, p. 2) sees hybrid organisations as “those that possess significant characteristics of more than one sector”. According to Doherty, Haugh and Lyon (2014, p. 418) hybrid organisations deal with “structures and practices that allow the coexistence of values and artefacts from two or more categories.” Seibel (2015, p. 697) describes these organisations as “formal or informal institutional arrangements of overlapping sectoral segments and/or combinations of governance mechanisms”. Battilana *et al.* (2017, p. 129) see organisational hybridity as “the mixing of core organisational elements that would not conventionally go together”. Others define it as “bundles of structures, strategies, and practices that simultaneously instantiate prescriptions from different logics” (Dalpiaz, Rindova and Ravasi, 2016, p. 35). Overall, organisational hybridity seems to refer to the mixing of resources, structures and/or practices, originating from different economic sectors.

1.3.2 Hybridity in rural social enterprises

As discussed in section 1.1 of this chapter, (rural) social enterprises span across the boundaries of different economic sectors (Leadbeater, 1997; Ridley-Duff and Bull, 2019). With their diversified resource base and associated practices, these organisations blur the boundaries between the private, public and third sector (Defourny and Nyssens, 2014; Anderson and Lent, 2017) and therefore are seen as ideal type hybrid organisations (Battilana and Lee, 2014; Doherty, Haugh and Lyon, 2014;

⁶ An example of a hybrid word is *sociology*, that is derived from the Latin ‘socius’ (meaning companion or associate) and the Greek λόγος (logos) (meaning discourse or science) (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2020).

Bauwens, Huybrechts and Dufays, 2020). Even though rural social enterprises are acknowledged to be hybrid organisations, little research has been done on how they are able to utilize their hybrid nature to respond to rural challenges (Anderson and Lent, 2017; Mitra, Byrne and Janssen, 2017). Because there is limited evidence of the dynamics of hybridity specifically in rural social enterprises, the following section will draw on knowledge around organisational hybridity from the field of social entrepreneurship in general and reflect on these findings from the point of view of rural social enterprises.

1.3.2.1 Advantages and challenges associated with organisational hybridity

Organisational hybridity brings along different internal and external opportunities and challenges (Battilana, Besharov and Mitzinneck, 2017). The ability to combine different lines of thinking and the access to a heterogeneous pool of knowledge are found to enhance creativity and innovative power (Dalpiaz, Rindova and Ravasi, 2016; Vickers *et al.*, 2017; Kokko, 2018). It allows organisations to move beyond the ‘prescribed’ response of one specific sector or institutional logic and combine organisational resources in new ways (Pache and Santos, 2010; Durand *et al.*, 2013; Jay, 2013). This enables hybrid organisations to deal with complex issues (Jay, 2013). Furthermore, hybridity is linked to organisational legitimacy. Some scholars suggest hybridity can enhance organisational legitimacy among different stakeholders with divergent expectations and thereby increase access to resources (Pache and Santos, 2013a; Wry, Lounsbury and Jennings, 2014; Smith and Besharov, 2019; Granados and Rosli, 2020). Other scholars point to the fact that the mixed character of hybrid organisations can leave both internal and external stakeholders puzzled about what to expect from the organisation (Kraatz and Block, 2008; Davies and Doherty, 2019), resulting in these organisations enduring a “legitimacy discount” (Battilana, Besharov and Mitzinneck, 2017, p. 14).

Hence, hybridity is related to different internal and external tensions created by competing demands arising from the different perspectives, values and logics upheld in social enterprises (Glynn, 2000; Jay, 2013; Battilana and Lee, 2014; Battilana, Besharov and Mitzinneck, 2017). Uncertainty about the organisational identity can result in conflict between different subgroups within the organisation (Glynn, 2000; Battilana and Dorado, 2010; Jay, 2013). Organisational members might also have to

deal with competing guides for action, which can result in frustration and stress in day to day work (Battilana, Besharov and Mitzinneck, 2017). Moreover, hybridity brings along a risk of ‘mission-drift’, in which, over time, one organisational logic becomes dominant over the other(-s) and hybridity collapses (Battilana and Lee, 2014; Cornforth, 2014). Furthermore, the involvement of external stakeholders representing different perspectives can lead to different interpretations of success criteria and norms (Johansen *et al.*, 2015). This can create conflicting external demands that need to be managed (Pache and Santos, 2010; Jay, 2013; Battilana and Lee, 2014; Doherty, Haugh and Lyon, 2014; Litrico and Besharov, 2019). This results in the need to carefully balance different perspectives and values in the organisation, creating for example a high level of complexity in the process of strategy making for social enterprises (Moizer and Tracey, 2010; Doherty, Haugh and Lyon, 2014). Because of the added organisational complexity, some scholars see hybrid organisations as “fragile organisations” (Santos, Pache and Birkholz, 2015, p. 38) that have to deal with additional challenges compared to organisation that operate from one perspective/logic (Lee and Battilana, 2013). For rural social enterprises this means added challenges on top of the challenges provided by the rural environment (Baumgartner, Pütz and Seidl, 2013; Müller, 2016), which could make it difficult for these organisations to reach long-term sustainability (Steiner, Farmer and Bosworth, 2019).

Even though hybridity in social enterprises is often related to the integration of different values or objectives in one organisation, it is also acknowledged that the external environment of an organisation is an important instigator of a hybrid way of working. Studies around social enterprises in the housing sector show that policy incentives are a great driver for hybridization, for example by pushing non-profit organisations towards commercial strategies (Teasdale, 2012; Mullins and Acheson, 2014). It is recognized within different sectors that hybridity can serve as an adaptive response to ambiguity caused by exogenous factors, like macro-economic trends or sectoral changes (Minkoff, 2002; Pache and Santos, 2010; Maibom and Smith, 2016). Hybridity can thus be used in “an effort to manage environmental uncertainty and episodic change” (Minkoff, 2002, p. 383). Given that rural areas are perceived to be low on traditional entrepreneurial resources, it can be argued that rural social enterprises utilize hybrid strategies in an attempt to create a viable organisational

model within a rural setting, among others through creating access to a wider resource base than traditional strategies, bound to one sectoral logic, would allow for (Steiner and Teasdale, 2019).

Overall, hybridity seems to provide rural social enterprises with elements of what Steinerowski and Steinerowska-Streb (2012, p. 178) call an “adaptive capacity” that enables them to come up with novel ways to reach their objectives within the structural challenges provided by the rural context. Hybridity can enable the creation of legitimacy with different stakeholder groups (from different economic sectors) and thus provide the ability to access a wide (and hybrid) resource base. Furthermore, hybridity seems to promote the innovative capacity needed to deal with the multi-dimensional challenges that can be part of the rural environment, by enabling the utilization of novel combinations of resources and practices to reach organisational objectives. However, hybridity also seems to provide rural social enterprises with challenges related to the management of various stakeholders, a diverse resource base and the associated different values and logics, which can result in difficulty to reach long-term sustainability. Dealing with these tensions has been the main focus of research in social enterprises so far, an overview of which will be provided in the next section.

1.3.2.2 Hybrid tensions and ways to deal with them

Organisational hybridity is related to increased organisational complexity and tensions (Smith and Besharov, 2019; Vallaster *et al.*, 2019). Smith, Gonin and Besharov (2013) distinguish four areas of tension that result from organisational hybridity in social enterprise. The first of these are *performing tensions*, that arise when a social enterprise aims to attain conflicting goals or fulfil competing demands from various stakeholders. These tensions relate to how success is defined and how priorities and metrics for different types of value creation are set (e.g. social, environmental, economic). The second area of tension is related to *organising tensions*. These tensions emerge from divergent internal dynamics and are for example related to conflicting guides for action in relation to organisational structures, procedures, and practices. Thirdly, *belonging tensions* can arise, which relate to conflicts of organisational identity and expectations of both internal and external stakeholders. Lastly, *learning tensions* can emerge, which are related to questions of growth and the timescale at which this should be achieved.

Previous research has distinguished three general ways in which social enterprises can try to deal with the tensions caused by hybridity (Battilana, Besharov and Mitzinneck, 2017). First of all, they can try to integrate or blend the different elements of hybridity as much as possible (Moizer and Tracey, 2010; Mongelli, Rullani and Versari, 2017). This can, for example, be done by *compromising*, which means mild alterations have to be made to individual logics in order to satisfy different demands (Pache and Santos, 2010), or by *combining organisational practices* (Battilana, Besharov and Mitzinneck, 2017). A second option can be to differentiate as much as possible, meaning distinct units are made that represent different parts of hybridity to prevent conflict (Moizer and Tracey, 2010; Mongelli, Rullani and Versari, 2017). Differentiation can take place at the level of organisational structure (e.g. making separate business units), at the level of practices (e.g. different ways of approaching external stakeholders) and at the level of roles (e.g. managers representing a business logics and physicians a health-care logic) (Battilana, Besharov and Mitzinneck, 2017). Minimizing a chance of conflict can be done by *compartmentalizing* different business activities, for example in different departments or business units (Pratt and Foreman, 2000) or by *defiance*, a strategy in which the organisation tries to actively remove the source of contradiction, for instance by actively rejecting one of the institutional demands (Pache and Santos, 2010). *Avoiding*, a situation in which an organisation tries to escape from, or conceal, the situation in which conformity is necessary or *manipulation*, a situation in which an organisation tries to actively alter the institutional demands are also forms of minimizing change of conflict between competing logics (Pache and Santos, 2010). A third option is to combine elements of integration and differentiation, in an attempt to mitigate the negative consequence of either of the strategies while still having their benefits (Battilana, Besharov and Mitzinneck, 2017), for example by implementing specific practices originating from different economic sectors/logics in one activity. This strategy is also called *selective coupling* (Pache and Santos, 2013a).

The above paragraph shows that hybridity in social enterprises is gaining increasing scholarly attention. Yet, previous research is mainly focused on the way in which these organisations deal with the complexity and tensions related to organisational hybridity. Less attention is paid to what enables social enterprises to create synergies from combining sectoral elements in one organisation, and which strategies and capabilities social enterprises develop in that light. Even though it should be

acknowledged that dealing with these hybrid tensions is important for long-term organisational survival (Vallaster *et al.*, 2019), previous research leaves important gaps in our knowledge in relation to if and how organisational hybridity enables social enterprises in general, and rural social enterprises in particular, to build the problem-solving capacity that is necessary to realize meaningful contributions to the communities that they serve (Anderson and Lent, 2017).

1.3.3 Research questions

In this chapter it has been brought forward that rural social enterprises are increasingly recognized as potential contributors to sustainable rural development. Evidence generated through previous research (presented in section 1.2 of this chapter) indeed demonstrates that rural social enterprises fulfil needs in rural areas that are not met otherwise, and that their practices are in line with contemporary ideas on rural development. Yet, it was also concluded that our understanding of rural social enterprises is limited (Munoz, Steiner and Farmer, 2015; Steiner and Teasdale, 2019), with “considerable research gaps” remaining in our knowledge of how these organisations work and how they relate to the places in which they operate (Steiner, Farmer and Bosworth, 2019, p. 142). In order to expand our understanding of rural social enterprises, the overall aim of this thesis is to explore how rural social enterprises are able to operate within the rural context in which they find themselves. It will do so by investigating two research questions. The first research question will focus on the wide and diverse resource base of rural social enterprises. Previous research reveals that organisational sustainability in social enterprises is reached not only through income generated through (commercial) market-based activities, but through a combination of resources originating from different economic sectors (Defourny and Nyssens, 2006; Haugh, 2009). Defourny and Nyssens (2010, p. 240) acknowledge that the resources utilized by social enterprises “can have a hybrid character and may come from trading activities, from public subsidies or from voluntary resources”. The resource base of rural social enterprises can thus be understood as a hybrid resource base, in which the different resources utilized need to be combined in a meaningful way in order to work together, rather than in isolation from each other (Haugh, 2009; Defourny and Nyssens, 2010). Yet, even though this hybrid resource base is acknowledged to be a key characteristic of rural social enterprises (Doherty, Haugh and Lyon, 2014; O’Shaughnessy and O’Hara, 2016b;

Steiner and Teasdale, 2019), research on how rural social enterprises are able to manage this resource base is lacking (Haugh, 2009; Anderson and Lent, 2017; Mitra, Byrne and Janssen, 2017; van Twuijver *et al.*, 2020). In order to address this gap in our knowledge, the first research question posed in this thesis is the following:

1. What capabilities do rural social enterprises develop in order to manage their hybrid resource base?

The second research question posed relates to the strong local focus of rural social enterprises and their relation with the places they serve. In previous research, this topic has been explored mainly through the analysis of local social capital and local networks. Hence, the role of varied local and extra local networks and diversified social capital in rural social enterprise is relatively well understood (Morrison, Ramsey and Bond, 2017; e.g. Ahrari *et al.*, 2018; Lang and Fink, 2019; Richter, 2019). Yet, section 1.2.3 shows that the relation between an organisation and the place in which it operates goes beyond social aspects, and includes among others institutional and material aspects of place as well (Steinerowski, Jack and Farmer, 2008; Steinerowski and Steinerowska-Streb, 2012; Smith and McColl, 2016). It was brought forward that there is a reciprocal relationship between rural social enterprises and the rural context in which they operate. The development of a rural social enterprise is influenced by the resources available in their rural setting, while engagement with these resources contributes to change of this setting (Anderson and Starnawska, 2008; Hindle, 2010; Zahra, Wright and Abdelgawad, 2014; Müller, 2016; Gaddefors and Anderson, 2019). As highlighted previously in this chapter, rural social enterprises are able to draw on unique rural resources (Anderson, 2000) and work alongside structural hurdles inherent to their rural context (Steinerowski and Steinerowska-Streb, 2012). Hitherto, way(s) in which this engagement with their local setting takes place remains largely underexplored (McKeever, Jack and Anderson, 2015; Steiner, Farmer and Bosworth, 2019; van Twuijver *et al.*, 2020). To progress in filling this knowledge gap, the second research question posed in this thesis is the following:

2. How do rural social enterprises engage with their rural context?

Here, the rural context will be understood from the perspective of a “pool of resources” (McKeever, Jack and Anderson, 2015; Gaddefors and Anderson, 2019, p. 8), meaning the empirical investigation will focus on the specific elements of the rural context that

are mobilized and employed by the rural social enterprises in their organisational endeavours. Insight into how these elements are utilized and a sense of how engagement with them alters the rural resource base will likely improve our understanding of the way(s) in which rural social enterprises operate and their potential contribution to processes of rural development. Furthermore, by taking a resource perspective on this second research question, the two research questions can be linked together (see Figure 2), providing an opportunity to explore how hybridity is related to the ability of rural social enterprises to operate within their rural context, hence, providing an interesting perspective on how rural social enterprises are able to operate within the rural setting in which they find themselves, which was previously brought forward as the overall research aim of this thesis.

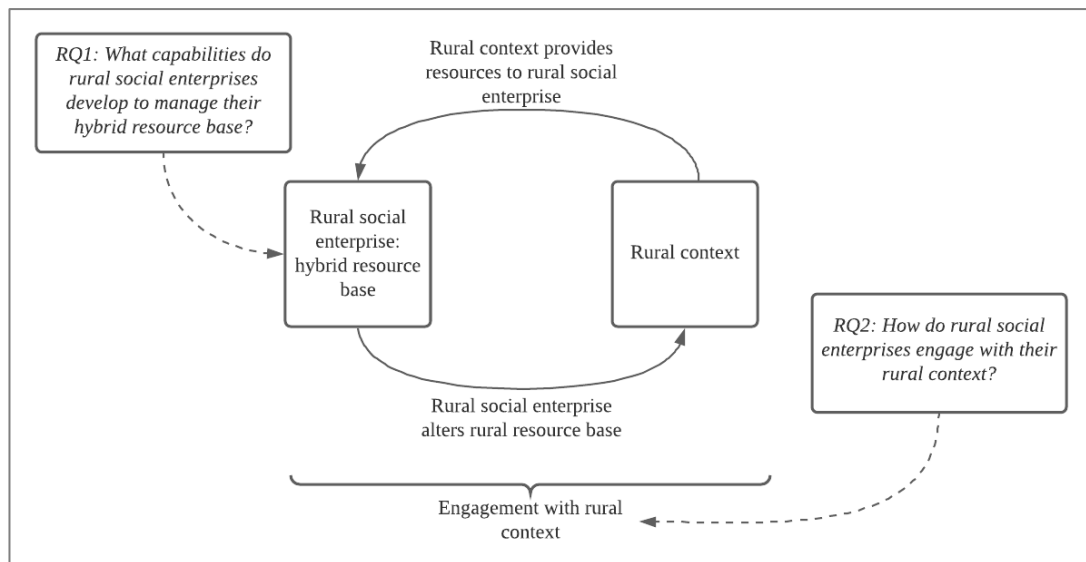


Figure 2: Research questions.

In analysing the proposed research questions, this thesis is aimed at making the following academic contributions. First of all, this study will deepen our understanding of how rural social enterprises operate, by investigating what capabilities are developed to manage their hybrid resource base. The field of rural social enterprise is still characterized as “undeveloped” (Steiner and Teasdale, 2019, p. 152), and with “considerable research gaps” (Steiner, Farmer and Bosworth, 2019, p. 142). Investigating what capabilities rural social enterprises develop to manage their hybrid resources base will aid our understanding of the way in which rural social

enterprises can contribute to the development of the rural localities and regions in which they are active. In doing so, this study will also aid to demystifying some of the “adaptive capacity” of rural social enterprises as found by Steinerowski and Steinerowska-Streb (2012, p. 178). Moreover, this study also addresses research gaps in the field of organisational hybridity. Research on organisational hybridity in social enterprises hitherto has mainly focused on the strategies needed to deal with tensions resulting from competing social and economic objectives. This study takes a different perspective in focussing on the capabilities developed in order to manage a hybrid resource portfolio.

Furthermore, by investigating the role of organisational hybridity in engagement with the rural context, this study responds to the call from Steiner and Teasdale (2019, p. 153), who state that in order to advance our knowledge on rural social enterprises “research should focus less on single social enterprises as self-contained systems, and pay more attention to their spatial and dynamic contexts”. This call is in line with acknowledgments in (rural) entrepreneurship literature that the relationship between enterprises and their environment provides an important research subject to advance our understanding of entrepreneurial behaviour and activities (Steyaert and Katz, 2004; Welter, 2011; Autio *et al.*, 2014; Zahra, Wright and Abdelgawad, 2014; Korsgaard, Ferguson and Gaddefors, 2015; Müller, 2016; Gaddefors and Anderson, 2017). Hence, in investigating the proposed research questions, this thesis will first and foremost contribute to literature on rural social enterprises. It will deepen our understanding of how these organisations function, which, from a policy perspective, will aid to better informed expectations of what rural social enterprises can achieve (Munoz, Steiner and Farmer, 2015; Mazzei and Roy, 2017; Steiner, Farmer and Bosworth, 2019). Furthermore, this study will broaden our knowledge on how rural social enterprises interact with their (rural) environment, thereby providing both a conceptual and empirical contribution to the growing stream of literature engaged with contextualising (social) entrepreneurship (Zahra, Wright and Abdelgawad, 2014; Korsgaard, Ferguson and Gaddefors, 2015; Müller, 2016; Gaddefors and Anderson, 2017; Müller and Korsgaard, 2018; Muñoz and Kimmitt, 2019).

1.3.4 Summary

So far in this chapter, we have explored social enterprises in general and rural social enterprises in particular. Evidence of the work of rural social enterprises has been

presented, as well as their main characteristics. Attention has been drawn to the close relationship between rural social enterprises and the rural context in which they operate. In the final section of this chapter, the discussion centred around organisational hybridity. In section 1.3.1, organisational hybridity was referred to as the utilization of a combination of resources, structures and/or practices, originating from different economic sectors, in one organisation (Doherty, Haugh and Lyon, 2014; Castellás, Stubbs and Ambrosini, 2019). In section 1.3.2 advantages and disadvantages, and ways to deal with tensions related to organisational hybridity were discussed.

In section 1.3.3, the discussion from this chapter was brought together to formulate the research questions that guided empirical data collection and analysis. Even though rural social enterprises are increasingly recognized as potential contributors to sustainable rural development, “considerable research gaps” remain in our understanding of how these organisations work and their relation to the places in which they operate (Steiner, Farmer and Bosworth, 2019, p. 142). Hence, the overall aim of this thesis is to explore how rural social enterprises are able to operate within the rural context in which they are established. It will do so by investigating the following two research questions:

1. What capabilities do rural social enterprises develop in order to manage their hybrid resource base?
2. How do rural social enterprises engage with their rural context?

By empirically investigating these research questions, this study will contribute to research on rural social enterprises, hybrid organisations and rural development. In the next chapter, the conceptual framework used to investigate the research questions in an empirical setting will be discussed.

Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework

In this chapter, the conceptual framework for this study will be discussed. This conceptual framework explains the main concepts that will be empirically investigated in order to formulate an answer to the proposed research questions (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Maxwell, 2012). In the previous chapter, the two research questions central to thesis were defined as follows:

1. What capabilities do rural social enterprises develop in order to manage their hybrid resource base?
2. How do rural social enterprises engage with their rural context?

In order to construct a conceptual framework that will guide the empirical data collection and analysis, this chapter is divided into three sections. The first section (section 2.1) deals with the development of a conceptual understanding of organisational hybridity and proposes the lens of Resource Orchestration Theory (ROT) to investigate how rural social enterprises are able to assemble and manage their hybrid resource base. The second section of this chapter (section 2.2) will provide a discussion on the understanding of the rural context that is used in this thesis. This section introduces the human geographic concept of 'place' as a lens for the investigation of how hybridity allows rural social enterprises to engage with their rural context. In the third and final section (section 2.3), ROT and place will be combined into the conceptual framework that will guide the empirical data collection and analysis in this study.

2.1 Organisational hybridity

2.1.1 A theoretical understanding of organisational hybridity

In the previous chapter, the concept of hybrid organisations has been introduced. There, it has been explained that organisational hybridity can be understood as the mixing of resources, structures and/or practices, originating from different economic sectors, in an organisation (Doherty, Haugh and Lyon, 2014; Castellás, Stubbs and Ambrosini, 2019). Social enterprises are perceived to be ideal type hybrid organisations (Battilana and Lee, 2014), but they are not the only organisations characterised as hybrid. In the field of public administration for example, service organisations practicing New Public Management are considered hybrid given that they provide services that are public in character, but resemble private organisations

in their organisation and management (Kickert, 2001; Thomasson, 2009; Brandsen and Karré, 2011). Organisational hybridity is also used as a lens to investigate public-private partnerships (Skelcher, 2005; Shaoul, Stafford and Stapleton, 2012). Other examples of hybrid organisations include non-governmental organisations that apply business methods in order to service growing demand (e.g. Battilana and Dorado, 2010), universities that combine their traditional academic tasks with generating market income (Mouwen, 2000; e.g. Jongbloed, 2015) and organisations in the cultural sector, that deal with challenges in balancing “artistic excellence versus economic utility” (Glynn, 2000, p. 285; Maitlis and Lawrence, 2003).

Organisational hybridity, and the different organisations and partnerships characterised by it, have been investigated using a wide variety of theoretical lenses. Battilana, Besharov and Mitzinneck (2017) have conducted a comprehensive literature review on hybrid organisations in the field of organisational studies. Based on the 254 articles included in their review they distinguish three main theoretical conceptualisations of organisational hybridity, related to multiple organisational identities, multiple organisational forms and multiple societal rationales. In the first conceptualisation, that of hybrid identities, hybrid organisations are perceived as those that possess multiple organisational identities that would not conventionally go together (Whetten, 2006). An example of this are professional arts and culture organisations, like the symphony orchestra central in the study of Glynn (2000). He shows how a combination of both an artistic and a commercial identity, upheld by different professional groups within the organisation, causes different points of view on organisational development and sets off an organisational crisis within the orchestra. The second theoretical conceptualisation of hybridity distinguished by Battilana, Besharov and Mitzinneck (2017) understands hybrid organisations as those that combine different organisational forms and governance structures. Studies utilizing this conceptualisation focus on questions of governance, control and ownership and the social norms and expectations related to various organisational forms. An example is the study of Wry, Lounsbury and Jennings (2014), who describe the different expectations of venture capitalists towards start-ups in the nanotechnology industry in relation to how these organisations combine elements of science and technology in their organisation. The third, and final, conceptualisation distinguished by Battilana, Besharov and Mitzinneck (2017) relates to societal

rationales. Much of the research in this stream is centred around the concept of societal or sectoral level logics. These logics represent a collective idea about appropriate organisational objectives and the means by which these can be achieved (Billis, 2010a; Pache and Santos, 2010). They provide the formal and informal “rules of the game” for a sector and guide organisational behaviour (Thornton and Ocasio, 1999; Billis, 2010a, p. 48). Hybridity is understood as the mixing of values, beliefs, and (cultural) practices belonging to different (and often competing) logics. An example is found in the study of Reay and Hinings (2005), who investigate the influence of the competing demands of a logic of medical professionalism and a business logic on developments in the health care sector.

So far, this section has provided an overview of the theoretical perspectives utilized in research on hybrid organisations in general. The following section will focus on how previous research on (rural) social enterprises has conceptualised hybridity.

2.1.1.1 Institutional logics as the dominant perspective of research on hybridity in social enterprises

In research on hybridity in social enterprises institutional theory holds a dominant theoretical position⁷ (Jay, 2013; Lee and Battilana, 2013; Pache and Santos, 2013a, 2013b; Maibom and Smith, 2016; Vickers *et al.*, 2017; Litrico and Besharov, 2019; Smith and Besharov, 2019). According to this point of view, the notion of organisational hybridity is based on the idea that organisations can be divided into sectors, based on the general principles that they follow (Billis, 2010a; Brandsen and Karré, 2011; Doherty, Haugh and Lyon, 2020). In this perspective, our economy in general is understood to be divided into three sectors: the private, public and third sector (Billis, 2010a; Seibel, 2015). Different authors describe ideal type logics for each of these three sectors (e.g. Billis, 2010a; Brandsen and Karré, 2011). Below, a general description of these ideal types will be provided, of which a summary can be found in Table 2. In general, the private sector is understood to follow a rational of profit maximization for shareholders, generated through revenue from sales and fees in a competitive marketplace (Brandsen and Karré, 2011). Work is typically conducted by paid employees, and governance is based upon the “size of share ownership”

⁷ The use of (neo-)institutional theory to conceptualize organisational hybridity can be placed in the third conceptualisation of Battilana *et al.* (2017), the one relating to societal rationales, as discussed in section 2.1.1.

(Billis, 2010a, p. 51). The public sector can be characterized by following principles of collective choice and public services, resourced by taxation. The governance structure is arranged around public elections and ownership is ultimately in the hands of citizens. Work is mainly conducted by paid public servants. In the third sector⁸, social and environmental goals prevail (Billis, 2010a; Brandsen and Karré, 2011). Revenue is usually generated through membership fees, voluntary contributions and donations. A wide range of organisations make up the third sector, ranging from charities, NGOs and cooperatives to voluntary organisations. These organisations can have different governance models (e.g. member-owned organisations versus trustee-controlled ones). Work in the third sector is mainly conducted by members and/or volunteers (which are not necessarily mutually exclusive categories in this instance).

	<i>Public</i>	<i>Private</i>	<i>Third Sector</i>
<i>Resources</i>	General allocations	Earning on marketplace	Donations, subsidies and voluntary contributions
<i>Goals</i>	Public good and welfare	Profit maximization	Specific to groups, situation and environment, contribute to public good and welfare
<i>Coordinating mechanisms</i>	Politics and public administration	Competition on the market place	Formal and informal influence of societal stakeholders
<i>Organisational culture and action logics</i>	Hierarchy, legality, equality	Entrepreneurialism, efficiency, effectiveness	Trust

Table 2: Characteristics of Public, Private and Third Sector Organisations (Source: Brandsen and Karré, 2011, p.829).

It is expected that organisations in each sector behave in line with the main principles outlined above. For example, it would be considered malfunctioning of an

⁸ Three different conceptualisations of the third sector have arisen throughout the years (Evers and Laville, 2004; Defourny, 2013). A first conceptualisation is linked to the understanding of the non-profit sector in the US, translating in a third sector that is characterised by non-profit organisations with a constrain on profit distribution. A second conceptualisation is linked to the social economy in Europe, with an emphasis on the democratic character of organisations and voluntary action from civil society actors. This understanding allows for (limited) profit-distribution, and hence, includes a wider variety of organisations than the first conceptualisation. Evers and Laville (2004) propose a third conceptualisation of the third sector, based on Polanyi's (1944) three forms of economic exchange (market-exchange, redistribution and reciprocity). Evers and Laville (2004) distinguish between the market economy (private sector), non-market economy (public sector) and the non-monetary economy (voluntary action, collective self-help) and see the third sector not as a distinct sector on its own, but as the sphere of interaction between these three different economic principles. The understanding of the third sector followed in this thesis lies closest to the second conceptualisation, hence, including a wide variety of organisations with different governance models and ownership structures (e.g. charities, NGOs, cooperatives, voluntary organisations).

organisation in the public sector if they would strive for profit maximization, even though this is seen as an appropriate organisational strategy for a private sector organisation. So, this sectoral division provides guiding principles that are made up of the assumptions, beliefs, values and practices that people (consciously and unconsciously) use in making decisions and undertaking day-to-day activities within an organisation. According to neo-institutional theory these guiding principles can be conceptualised as institutional logics, this being the logics for action that represent a collective idea about appropriate objectives and the means by which these can be achieved (Friedland and Alford, 1991; Pache and Santos, 2013b). These form the formal and informal “rules of the game” for a sector (Thornton and Ocasio, 1999; Billis, 2010a, p. 48), and provide a framework to understand what drives (organisational) behaviour (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008; Vickers *et al.*, 2017; Kokko, 2018). Despite the expectation that organisations behave in line with the guiding principles in their sector, some organisations structurally combine different practices and logics. These organisations are understood as hybrid organisations.

From an institutional logics perspective, research on hybridity in social enterprises has mainly focused on the duality between the social mission and the market-based activities employed to achieve this mission (Quélin, Kivleniece and Lazzarini, 2017; Bauwens, Huybrechts and Dufays, 2020). Hybridity is then conceptualised as an attempt to combine dual and likely conflicting goals, namely the creation of both social and economic value (Mair, Mayer and Lutz, 2015). In empirical research, this is often translated into a focus on two specific logics in social enterprises: a social (or social welfare) logic and an economic (or commercial or market) logic (Doherty, Haugh and Lyon, 2014; Pinch and Sunley, 2015; Child, 2020), both with their own influence on the organisational goals, form, governance structure and perceived legitimacy by external stakeholders and resource providers (Pache and Santos, 2010). In this line of thinking, research around hybridity in social enterprises has primarily focused on internal management strategies to deal with the tension caused by hybridity (see chapter 1, section 1.3.2 for an overview of these strategies).

From a static to a dynamic view on hybridity

Previous research on hybridity in social enterprises has emphasised the intraorganizational means by which these organisations balance competing logics resulting from hybridity and the tensions arising from this (Battilana and Dorado,

2010; Pache and Santos, 2013a, 2013b). Increasingly, research acknowledges that this balance is not a static given, but that it is a dynamic process that changes over time, as change takes place internally in the organisation as well as in the environment in which the organisation operates (Davies and Doherty, 2019; Smith and Besharov, 2019). Hybridity is thus no longer perceived to be a binary status, either an organisation is hybrid or not, but as a dynamic concept, with variation in the way in which different logics are present and compatible within an organisation over time (Davies and Doherty, 2019; Shepherd, Williams and Zhao, 2019; Smith and Besharov, 2019). Hence, maintaining a productive balance between the different types of resources that make up the hybrid resource base of rural social enterprises, is likely to require constant organisational attention and learning, as shifts in both the internal and external environment of an organisation create the need for new balance(s) to be established between different organisational elements (Davies and Doherty, 2019; Smith and Besharov, 2019).

2.1.2 Hybridity through the lens of Resource Orchestration Theory

The institutional perspective on social enterprises as hybrid organisations has provided us with important insights into the complex nature of these organisations. It has revealed some of the challenges these organisations have to grapple with and has provided insights into the internal management strategies utilized to deal with these challenges. In doing so, the perspective has primarily focused on the conflicting objectives of these organisations and ways in which social enterprises deal with the contradictory demands relating to them (Quélin, Kivleniece and Lazzarini, 2017). Less attention has been paid to how social enterprises are able to utilize hybridity (Anderson and Lent, 2017; Mitra, Byrne and Janssen, 2017). Yet, hybridity has been linked to increased innovative capacity (Dalpiaz, Rindova and Ravasi, 2016; Kokko, 2018), an ability to design solutions to complex societal challenges (Jay, 2013), and an ability to mobilize a wide and diverse resource base (Doherty, Haugh and Lyon, 2014). Furthermore, the literature review in chapter 1 has shown that in the case of rural social enterprises, hybridity can be linked to their ability to operate successfully in a rural setting (Anderson and Lent, 2017; Steiner and Teasdale, 2019). In line with the first research question raised in this thesis, the focus of the conceptual framework will thus lie on the capabilities rural social enterprises develop in order to make use of their hybrid resource base.

In the literature review it was established that the wide range of resources mobilized by rural social enterprises, including but not limited to market income, public funding, philanthropic funding, donations, and volunteer effort, have their roots in different economic sectors and hence can be perceived as a hybrid resource base (Defourny and Nyssens, 2010; van Twuijver *et al.*, 2020). Rural social enterprises need to develop capabilities in order to combine these resources in a meaningful way so that they contribute to fulfilment of the organisational mission (Haugh, 2009; Anderson and Lent, 2017). In order to investigate this, a conceptual framework is proposed based on Resource Orchestration Theory (ROT), which has its theoretical roots in Strategic Management literature. ROT is focused on explaining how an organisation's resource portfolio is effectively maintained and deployed to reach an objective (Sirmon *et al.*, 2011; Schriber and Löwstedt, 2018). The perspective acknowledges three dimensions that are linked to this effective utilization of the resources available to an organisation, namely the assemblage of the resource portfolio, the dynamic capabilities developed to utilize these resources and the organisational action that makes this happen (Helfat *et al.*, 2007; Sirmon, Hitt and Ireland, 2007; Sirmon *et al.*, 2011). The section below will explore the theoretical roots of ROT and evaluate its applicability to understanding rural social enterprises, before explaining the theory itself in more depth in the subsequent section.

2.1.2.1 Rural social enterprises and the theoretical underpinnings of Resource Orchestration Theory

Resource Orchestration Theory (ROT) is rooted in the academic field of Strategic Management. In general, this field is preoccupied with explaining how organisations formulate strategies and allocate resources to reach and maintain a competitive advantage, often in a for-profit marketplace (Cox *et al.*, 2012). However, many scholars acknowledge that strategic management and the capabilities associated with it are not solely linked to the creation of a competitive advantage, but to a broader range of value creation, and the general processes and strategies used to manage resources in order to fulfil the organisational purpose (Meyskens *et al.*, 2010; Bacq and Eddleston, 2018). Hence, strategic management is acknowledged by different scholars to be an important part of the organisational development of not just commercial for-profit organisations, but also of public and non-profit organisations (Cornforth and Edwards, 1999), hybrid organisations in general (Joldersma and

Winter, 2002; Billis and Rochester, 2020) and social enterprises in particular (Ridley-Duff and Bull, 2019; Doherty, Haugh and Lyon, 2020). Although gaining a competitive advantage is not a primary goal of social enterprises, these organisations do need to effectively utilize resources and competencies in order to reach their organisational goals (Haugh, 2009; Meyskens *et al.*, 2010; Day and Jean-Denis, 2016; Bacq and Eddleston, 2018).

ROT is a research stream in Strategic Management literature that draws on two theoretical pillars from within this field: the Resource Based View (RBV) and the perspective of Dynamic Capabilities. The Resource Based View sees an organisation as a collection of resources, made up out of assets (things an organisation has) and capabilities (things an organisation does) (Diin Fitri, Dahlan and Sukardi, 2018). The traditional RBV holds that these resources are distributed heterogeneously among organisations and therefore can be a source of competitive advantage. It is one of the most influential theoretical pillars of Strategic Management Research (Barney, Wright and Ketchen Jr, 2001) but has received criticism for having an overly commercial focus (Hart, 1995; Tate and Bals, 2018). Recently, the concept is moving beyond its narrow focus on commercial competitive advantage and starts to include a broader range of value orientations. This is illustrated by recent developments in the establishment of a Natural Resource Based View (NRBV), focused on resources and capabilities related to environmental outcomes (Hart, 1995; McDougall, Wagner and MacBryde, 2019) and the Social Resource Based View (SRBV), which is focused on understanding holistic organisational performance, including economic, social, and environmental goals (da Silva and Bitencourt, 2018; Tate and Bals, 2018; Sinthupundaja, Kohda and Chiadamrong, 2020). These extensions of the traditional RBV focus on a broader range of value creation for multiple stakeholders (Bell and Dyck, 2011), something that is in line with the way of working of social enterprises (Day and Jean-Denis, 2016; Abbas, Arshad and Subramaniam, 2019). Hence, these extended understandings of RBV provide a lens to investigate the “resources and capabilities [that] enhance a social enterprise’s competencies to effectively achieve its social and economic purposes” (Sinthupundaja, Kohda and Chiadamrong, 2020, p. 4; Haugh, 2009; Bacq and Eddleston, 2018; Tate and Bals, 2018). In this light, rural social enterprises can be understood as “organisations whose ability to attain their goals and create social value is impacted by being able to combine and convert

acquired resources” (Meyskens *et al.*, 2010, p. 663; Bacq and Eddleston, 2018). Hence, RBV suggests that rural social enterprises need to combine the different resources comprising their hybrid resource base in such a way that it supports the achievement of the organisational goals (Haugh, 2009).

In order to understand how different resources can be combined and utilized, ROT incorporates thinking from the theoretical field of Dynamic Capabilities (Sirmon *et al.*, 2011; Cui and Pan, 2015). Literature on Dynamic Capabilities is concerned with the role of routines and managerial as well as organisational processes in relation to the attraction and modification of the resource base of an organisation (Peteraf, Di Stefano and Verona, 2013). According to this perspective, an organisation should not only have access to resources, but also should have the capabilities to utilize these resources and to adjust the resource base in relation to environmental changes in order to effectively serve its market (Helfat *et al.*, 2007; Sirmon *et al.*, 2011). This does not only hold for commercial for-profit organisations, but also for (rural) social enterprises. Haugh (2009, p. 113) concludes that “ownership of resources is insufficient to create a financially sustainable social venture, rather it is the development of firm-specific capabilities to exploit resources that is crucial”. This is endorsed by more scholars who state that “it is essential for social enterprises to acquire resources and develop capabilities to reach their social goals” (Bacq and Eddleston, 2018, p. 592; Sinthupundaja, Kohda and Chiadamrong, 2020).

Yet, the capabilities developed by social enterprises only recently seem to gain scholarly attention. De Silva, Al-Tabbaa and Khan (2019), Vallaster *et al.* (2019), Vézina, Ben and Malo (2019) and Best *et al.* (2020) all built on the seminal work of Teece and colleagues (Teece, Pisano and Shuen, 1997; Teece, 2007) in studying dynamic capabilities in social enterprises. Teece (2007) has distinguished three general dynamic capabilities of importance for for-profit organisations in the light of (technological) innovation. The first is a sensing capability, representing the capacity to sense and shape opportunities and threats outside the organisation. The second is a seizing capability. This capability refers to the capacity of an organisation to seize and capture value from opportunities. The third is a transforming capability, which relates to the constant adaptations and alterations an organisation must make to its intangible and tangible assets in order to maintain a competitive advantage. De Silva, Al-Tabbaa and Khan (2019) built on this work and focus on the underlying processes of the

sensing, seizing and transforming capabilities in the light of business model innovations aimed at integrating social and economic value creation by internationally operating social enterprises. Vallaster *et al.* (2019) take the dynamic capabilities defined by Teece (2007) as a starting point to investigate how the social enterprises in their study deal with tensions related to their hybrid nature. They confirm the three dynamic capabilities formulated by Teece (2007), and add a fourth one: a liaison capability, representing the capacity to connect to different stakeholders internal and external to the social enterprise. Vézina, Ben and Malo (2019) also depart from the capabilities of Teece (2007) in investigating the social innovation process in a large, market based social enterprise. They conclude that sensing, seizing and transforming can be perceived as stages in the social innovation process. Best *et al.* (2020) relate business model innovation of social enterprises to the dynamic capabilities of sensing, seizing and transforming, while they explore how tensions between social and economic missions can be managed at a network level using these dynamic capabilities. Sinthupundaja, Kohda and Chiadamrong (2020) take a different approach and define four new dynamic capabilities social enterprises use in order to create social, economic and environmental value at the same time. They distinguish between the capabilities of mission-driven management, stakeholder management, cross-sector collaborations and environmental management. Yet, research on the type of capabilities rural social enterprises develop in the light of managing their hybrid resource base remains largely absent. Because of the complex nature of resource configurations and operational models of rural social enterprises as hybrid organisations, applying a dynamic capabilities perspective is deemed useful to better understand how these organisations create and maintain a base of resources and capabilities that supports the organisational purpose (Bloom and Smith, 2010; De Silva, Al-Tabbaa and Khan, 2019; Vallaster *et al.*, 2019). Specifically, in relation to the hybrid character of the resource base of these organisations, which, as argued in section 2.1.1, is not a static given, but requires constant organisational attention. Hence, exploring the routines and processes rural social enterprises develop in order to create and maintain a productive balance between the different resources available to the organisation is important to deepen our understanding of how rural social enterprises operate. The first research question posed in this thesis is aimed at understanding this by empirically investigating which capabilities rural social

enterprises develop in the process of building and maintaining their hybrid resource portfolio. In taking together the ideas from the Resource Based View and the Dynamic Capabilities perspective, ROT provides a useful conceptual lens to investigate this.

2.1.2.2 Resource Orchestration Theory

Resource Orchestration Theory (ROT) is focussed on the assemblage of the resource portfolio and the dynamic capabilities developed for utilizing these resources (Sirmon, Hitt and Ireland, 2007), which both require intentional organisational action (Helfat *et al.*, 2007; Sirmon *et al.*, 2011). According to ROT, resources are those physical, human and organizational assets and organisational attributes that a firm can utilize in the fulfilment of its purpose (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000; Barney, Wright and Ketchen Jr, 2001). They can be internal or external to the organisation (Vallaster *et al.*, 2019) and can be of a tangible or intangible nature (Schriber and Löwstedt, 2018). In the current study, three general categories of resources have been distinguished through previous research as important for the establishment and development of rural social enterprises, namely financial, human and physical resources (Haugh, 2009; Doherty, Haugh and Lyon, 2014; Müller and Korsgaard, 2018; Barraket *et al.*, 2019). Financial resources refer to the income generated through trading activities in a (commercial) market, government funding/grants and private gifts, the latter including donations, philanthropic funding and income generated through fundraising activities (Haugh, 2009; Doherty, Haugh and Lyon, 2014). Human resources include all the staff, directors, trustees and/or volunteers (and the experience and social networks that they bring into the organisation) that the rural social enterprise can draw upon (Haugh, 2009; Karré, 2018; Barraket *et al.*, 2019). Staff can be either paid directly by the social enterprise or subsidized through active labour market programmes or third parties (Defourny and Nyssens, 2006). Physical resources refer to the building(s), equipment and other material resources at the disposal of the organisation (Haugh, 2009). In a rural setting, previous research has furthermore highlighted the importance of physical resources embedded in the rural location and the landscape, like local infrastructure, historical buildings, and natural assets in the form of forests, lakes and mountains, for the development of social entrepreneurial activities (Anderson, 2000; Steinerowski and Steinerowska-Streb, 2012; Barraket *et al.*, 2019).

ROT puts emphasis on the processes through which these different resources are assembled in a resource portfolio and utilized by an organisation. Sirmon and

colleagues (Sirmon, Hitt and Ireland, 2007; Sirmon *et al.*, 2011) distinguish three main processes related to resource orchestration within an organisation. These are the *structuring* of the resource portfolio, the *bundling* of these resources to create or modify organisational capabilities, and the *leveraging* of the organisational capabilities to create value. These different processes of resource orchestration do not operate in isolation from each other, but need to be linked and synchronized for an organisation to be able to effectively reach the organisational goals (Helfat *et al.*, 2007; Sirmon, Hitt and Ireland, 2007; Baert *et al.*, 2016). Hence, ROT emphasizes that an organisation should not just possess resources, but also needs the capabilities to utilize these resources in an effective and goal-directed manner (Helfat *et al.*, 2007; Haugh, 2009; Sirmon *et al.*, 2011).

The capabilities underlying the resource orchestration process are dynamic capabilities, that can be defined as “the capacity of an organization to purposefully create, extend, and modify its resource base” (Helfat *et al.*, 2007, p. 4). They include specific organisational processes and routines that are used by managers to increase performance (Vallaster *et al.*, 2019) and adapt to changes in the external environment (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000; Teece, 2018). An example is an alliance capability, that represents the capacity of an organisation to build successful alliances with external stakeholders (Sluyts, Martens and Matthyssens, 2010). Dynamic capabilities differ from ordinary organisational capabilities that guide day-to-day operations (Zahra, Sapienza and Davidsson, 2006; Teece, 2018). Ordinary capabilities are those routines that, in the short term, help an organisation earn its day to day living (Winter, 2003), like for example a process of service delivery or a reporting system (Diin Fitri, Dahlan and Sukardi, 2018). They are those organizational structures and managerial procedures which support the basic productive processes and functions of an organisation (Winter, 2003; Diin Fitri, Dahlan and Sukardi, 2018). Dynamic capabilities, on the other hand, are not involved in the actual production process (Helfat and Peteraf, 2003), but are aimed at creating, extending, or modifying these ordinary capabilities and hence, often involve alterations to a firm’s resource base (Winter, 2003; Zahra, Sapienza and Davidsson, 2006).

Dynamic capabilities are built up out of so-called micro-foundations. These micro-foundations can be understood as the actual processes and routines (hereafter referred to as practices) utilized at an organisational level to create or improve a dynamic

capability (Teece, Pisano and Shuen, 1997; De Silva, Al-Tabbaa and Khan, 2019; Vallaster *et al.*, 2019). For example, Vallaster *et al.* (2019) have distinguished the four dynamic capabilities of sensing opportunities, seizing opportunities, transforming and liaising as important for the way in which the social enterprises in their study deal with tensions related to their hybrid nature. Underlying these four dynamic capabilities are different micro-foundations. In the case of the liaising capability for example, Vallaster *et al.* (2019) distinguish two micro-foundations: the establishment of enabling (inter)organisational spaces where internal and external organisational stakeholder can meet and exchange information, and stakeholder-inclusive governance in the form of formal, structured governance processes that secure involvement of both internal and external stakeholders in decision making. Hence, where the dynamic capability describes an overall capacity, the micro-foundations provide an insight into the practices underlying this capability.

Figure 3 provides an overview of the main theoretical assumptions taken from ROT in the light of this thesis. In exploring the capabilities and the underlying micro-foundations utilized by rural social enterprise to manage their hybrid base of resources, ROT provides a framework to explore the routines and processes rural social enterprises employ in order to build, maintain and utilize their hybrid resource portfolio, and thus will create insight into how these organisations effectively blur the boundaries between different economic sectors in order to fulfil their organisational objectives. Hence, ROT provides a hitherto underexplored perspective on hybridity in rural social enterprises (Haugh, 2009; Meyskens *et al.*, 2010; Bacq and Eddleston, 2018; De Silva, Al-Tabbaa and Khan, 2019).

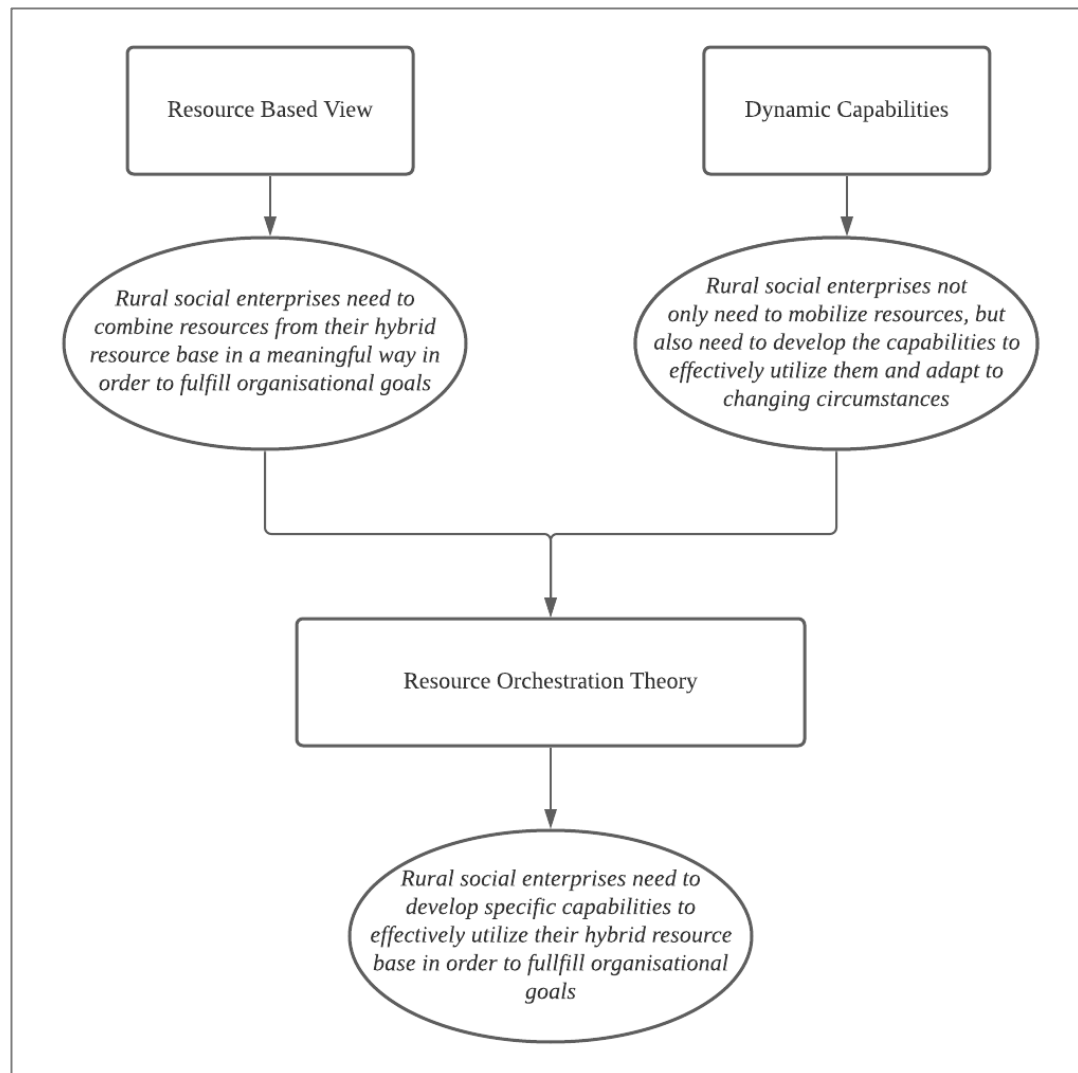


Figure 3: Theoretical assumptions Resource Orchestration Theory in relation to rural social enterprises.

2.2 Rurality

It was established in chapter 1 that rural social enterprises have an intrinsic link with the rural context in which they operate (Munoz, 2010; Eversole, Barraket and Luke, 2014; Steiner and Teasdale, 2019). (Rural) entrepreneurship literature acknowledges that context matters for entrepreneurial activities (Steyaert and Katz, 2004; Korsgaard, Ferguson and Gaddefors, 2015; Müller, 2016) and previous research has shown that it is the way in which enterprises engage with their environment, and the resources that it provides, that shapes entrepreneurial activity and outcomes (Anderson, 2000; Müller and Korsgaard, 2018; Gaddefors and Anderson, 2019). At the end of chapter 1, it was brought forward that in this study, the focus lies on those elements of the rural context that are mobilized and employed by rural social enterprises in their organisational

endeavours (McKeever, Anderson and Jack, 2014; Gaddefors and Anderson, 2019). Yet, context is a broad concept that can encompass many different aspects, and hence needs a focused conceptualisation in order to be of use (Zahra, Wright and Abdelgawad, 2014; Baker and Welter, 2018; Müller and Korsgaard, 2018). In an organisational setting, context is often depicted as the broad container for all factors external to an organisation. However, in its operationalisation, priority is often given to social, economic, cultural and political elements, neglecting the natural environment and its material elements (Shrivastava, 1994; Guthey, Whiteman and Elmes, 2014). Yet, through the literature review of this study it is established that not only social, but also physical elements in the rural context of rural social enterprises are of importance for their development. In order to create a broad understanding of the rural context in which rural social enterprises operate, including both the geographic and social elements of the rural, this study will explore the human geographic concept of ‘place’ (Cresswell, 2013). Because the concept of place allows for a broader understanding of the rural context, then traditional conceptualisations of the organisational context (Guthey, Whiteman and Elmes, 2014), it is well suited to create a deeper understanding of the ways in which rural social enterprises engage with elements of their rural context, as is the main focus of the second research question of this thesis. Furthermore, the concept of place resonates well with contemporary understandings of ‘the rural’ as a multidimensional concept (Shucksmith and Brown, 2016). Exploring this academic understanding of the rural will be the focus of the following subsection (section 2.2.1). In the subsequent subsection (section 2.2.2), the concept of ‘place’, and the way in which it can be utilized in this study, is explored in more detail.

2.2.1 A theoretical understanding of ‘the rural’

When talking about rural areas, we can all draw up a mental picture of such a place. When describing and comparing these pictures, they are likely to differ a great amount. As Woods (2005, p. 15) describes it: “Rural is one of those curious words which everybody thinks they know what it means, but which is actually very difficult to define precisely.” Therefore, it is not surprising that the academic understanding of the concept has changed throughout the past decades. Academic approaches towards understanding ‘the rural’ have developed from very descriptive to focusing on the multi-dimensional interplay of different domains.

In a traditional descriptive approach, rurality is described in observable and measurable statistical indicators (Halfacree, 1993; Woods, 2005; Shucksmith and Brown, 2016). This is the least complicated way of defining the rural and is often used in policy definitions. An example of this is the definition the OECD uses (OECD, 2006, p. 26). In this definition, population density is the main indicator to define rural areas. Out of this, the OECD creates a typology of Predominately Rural, Intermediate Rural and Predominately Urban regions. Another descriptive approach is to define urban regions (via for example population density and remoteness) and name the residual area rural (Hodge *et al.*, 2000). This is the approach Eurostat takes in its Regional Handbook (Eurostat, 2019). Eurostat uses grid cells of 1km² to measure population density. Using this approach, cities are defined as areas with more than 50.000 inhabitants and connecting grid cells with more than 1.500 inhabitants per km². Towns and suburbs are defined as areas with more than 5000 inhabitants and connecting grid cells with more than 300 inhabitants per km². Rural areas are defined as the “thinly populated areas” outside the cities, towns and suburbs (Eurostat, 2019)⁹.

Descriptive definitions like these allow little space for grasping the heterogeneity of rural areas. Each area has unique characteristics and can have a different function and hold a different relationship with its surrounding areas (Halfacree, 1993; Woods, 2005; Ward and Brown, 2009). This left room for a second approach to develop: the socio-cultural approach (Halfacree, 1993), also called the spatial determinism approach (Shucksmith and Brown, 2016). Underlying this approach is the assumption that behaviour and attitudes are affected by population density (Halfacree, 1993). Distinction between ‘urban’ and ‘rural’ is made based on values, behaviours, and social characteristics of residents. Tönnies (1963) for example makes a distinction between ‘*Gemeinschaft*’ (community) as defining the rural and ‘*Gesellschaft*’ (society) as defining the urban. A critique to such dichotomies is that they oversimplify the dynamics of a social setting (Woods, 2005; Cloke, 2006). In a response, some scholars moved to a rural-urban continuum. Underlying both the dichotomy and the

⁹ The existence of other, more nuanced definitions of rural areas defined through different research projects (e.g. EDORA, FARO, GEOSPECS) is acknowledged. However, given that the goal of this section is not to analyse different methods of definition, but to investigate how rurality can be understood, these descriptive methods are not described in detail here.

continuum approach is the assumption that characteristics of the rural environment produce distinctive rural behaviour (Halfacree, 1993). This assumption got questioned when the idea that 'space' is not merely a given but is produced and can be altered gained common acceptance (Halfacree, 1993).

In the quest to develop a more dynamic approach towards understanding rurality, a third approach to defining the term arose. This stream sees rural as locality and draws mainly on structuralist political economy approaches (Halfacree, 1993; Shucksmith and Brown, 2016). Such a locality-based approach emphasises the processes in play that create rural localities (Woods, 2005) and it tries to define between urban and rural by specifying the typical structures that set them apart (Halfacree, 1993). However, distinguishing the structural features to define both urban and rural proved difficult (Halfacree, 1993; Woods, 2005). Focus shifted to an understanding of what rural means and to whom (Shucksmith and Brown, 2016), which gave rise to another approach of understanding rurality. In this approach, emphasis is not on the statistical features of rurality, but on the ideas, values, symbols and images that people attribute to the term. Consequently, an area is not marked as rural only by structural features like population density, but by the people that live, use, and visit this area and their social relations. In other words: rural becomes a social construct¹⁰ (Cloke, 2006; Woods, 2010; Shucksmith and Brown, 2016).

However, critiques of this approach argue that this neglects the material aspects of the rural and propose a focus on the interplay between different dimensions of rurality, including both material and symbolic aspects (Cloke, 2006; Shucksmith and Brown, 2016). Halfacree (2006, p. 47) for example proposes to view the rural both as a physical locality and as a social construct, because "the material and ideational rural spaces they refer to intersect in practice". Hence, a view of rural areas as multidimensional complex entities arises (Heley and Jones, 2012; Shucksmith and Brown, 2016).

2.2.1.1 Core – periphery

Another academic debate that is of interest for our understanding of the rural is centred around the dichotomy between core and periphery (Baumgartner, Pütz and Seidl,

¹⁰ Social constructs are identities that are build up by attributing social, cultural, aesthetic and ideological characteristics to people, places, objects or ideas. It is a construct of imagination and therefore only exists as much as people believe it to exist (Woods, 2005).

2013). In this dichotomy, the core is made up out of metropolitan areas. The periphery is seen as a subordinate of this, constituted of those regions that can be found outside the main metropolitan areas (Anderson, 2000). Hence, rural areas are part of this periphery. However, again, this represents more than just a spatial characteristic. There is a difference of power between the core and the periphery (Anderson, 2000; Lagendijk and Lorentzen, 2007). Institutions are often located in the core (Müller and Korsgaard, 2018). Power and control are concentrated over there, so it is for example where decisions concerning the distribution of resources are made. A consequence of this is that a gravitational force comes into play, through which more resources are attracted to the core and drawn away from the periphery (Anderson, 2000). In peripheral regions, like rural areas, the negotiation power of local government and local institutions towards higher levels of government can be small (Richter, 2019). These dynamics between the core and the periphery can intensify challenges in rural areas, like inadequate infrastructure and lack of business support, and hence creates barriers for social entrepreneurial activity.

The previous discussion shows that the academic understanding of the rural has evolved from a pure descriptive understanding of the rural as an area with certain geographic and demographic characteristics, towards a multidimensional view that incorporates both geographic and social aspects (Staeheli, 2003; Cresswell, 2013; Shucksmith and Brown, 2016). In order to conceptualise these different dimensions for the empirical part of this study, the next section will discuss the human geographic concept of ‘place’, which allows for both geographic, social and symbolic elements to be included in an exploration of the rural context in which rural social enterprises operate. Hence, the concept of place allows for the multidimensional character of the rural to be incorporated in the empirical part of this study.

2.2.2 Place

2.2.2.1 From space to place

In section 2.2.1 of this chapter, it was shown that ‘the rural’ is more than a spatial concept that indicates a certain geographical area. It is not just a *space* in which certain activities take place. It is a *place* that is formed through the interaction of both human factors, like relationships, networks and flows of resources, and non-human factors, like geographic characteristics (Cloke, 2006; Winterton *et al.*, 2014; Shucksmith and

Brown, 2016; Horlings, Roep and Wellbrock, 2018). The distinction between space and place in human geography understands space as a more abstract notion concerned with abstract geometrics (like volume, areas, direction) (Gieryn, 2000; Cresswell, 2013). There is no meaning or particularity in space, whereas a place is characterised by human experience and attached meanings and symbolic understanding (Gieryn, 2000; Staeheli, 2003; Guthey, Whiteman and Elmes, 2014). According to Shrivastava and Kennelly (2013, p. 84, emphasis in original) place can be understood “as a multidimensional concept, defining it as *a built or natural landscape, possessing a unique geographical location, invested with meaning*. It has materiality but is also socially constructed.” Defining elements of a place are thus its geographical location, material aspects, social relations and meaningfulness (Sack, 1997; Gieryn, 2000; Thomas and Cross, 2007). In theorizing and investigating place, it is understood that these elements are connected. Unique configurations of these different elements lead to a unique set of characteristics for each individual rural area (Hoggart, 1990; Heley and Jones, 2012; Shucksmith and Brown, 2016). These configurations are not static but dynamic, making places “time and space specific” (Horlings, Roep and Wellbrock, 2018, p. 5). So, place derives its unique structure from a mix of different human and non-human aspects, a mix that likely changes over time (Sack, 1997).

Despite the theoretical acknowledgment that place is made up out of both social and physical elements, in empirical research, the focus is often on social processes in the construction of place (Sack, 1997; Stedman, 2003; Munoz, 2010; Eversole, Barraket and Luke, 2014; Vlasov, Bonnedahl and Vincze, 2018). This trend is also observed in previous studies on rural entrepreneurship. In studies that focus on place and entrepreneurial activity, the theme of embeddedness, which theorizes the social links between enterprises and their local environment, is commonly used to explain how entrepreneurial activity in rural areas is linked to social ties and social networks in a certain place. Among others Jack and Anderson (2002), Seelos *et al.* (2011), Vestrum and Rasmussen (2013), McKeever, Anderson and Jack (2014) and Vestrum (2014) use the lens of social embeddedness to explain how social ties guide engagement with place and enable opportunity recognition and opportunity realisation of rural (social) entrepreneurs. These studies show that local social ties are of great importance for entrepreneurial activities in rural areas. They also recognize that social embeddedness can have a downside, as social and moral obligations might become constraining and

impede business development (Jack and Anderson, 2002). Another approach to explore the social and/or institutional relations of rural enterprises in a certain place is found in Lang, Fink and Kibler (2014) who investigate the cognitive and normative elements that entrepreneurs draw upon in their response to local (regulatory) environments in a rural setting. Richter (2019) utilizes the perspective of social network theory to explain how rural social entrepreneurs connect local and external resources and networks. His findings are in line with those of Lang and Fink (2019), who draw on social capital theory to explore the different types of social capital utilized by rural social enterprises, and show how rural social enterprises utilize and strengthen both horizontal and vertical ties.

The studies referred to above provide us with valuable insights into the importance of both local and non-local social and institutional links for rural enterprises (Baker and Welter, 2018). They show that (different types of) social capital form an important organisational resource that is embedded in various networks and relationships (Lang and Fink, 2019). To connect this perspective to the place-based understanding of rurality as described above, it is important to recognize that the physical surrounding “sets bounds and gives form” to the social and institutional processes that take place within it (Stedman, 2003, p. 671; Stathopoulou, Psaltopoulos and Skuras, 2004; Gaddefors and Anderson, 2019). Therefore, the conceptual framework utilized in this thesis needs to include not only the social, but also the physical elements of the rural that affect entrepreneurial activity. Even though limited research exists utilizing such a multidimensional interpretation of place to understand entrepreneurial activity (Munoz, 2010; Korsgaard, Ferguson and Gaddefors, 2015), evidence from studies on rural entrepreneurship shows that the material elements of the rural can both enable and constrain entrepreneurial activity.

In chapter 1 (section 1.2) it was already highlighted that rural based social enterprises are found to have the ability to work alongside the structural challenges provided by their rural environment (Steinerowski and Steinerowska-Streb, 2012). These structural challenges include among others material geographic features (Steinerowski and Woolvin, 2012; Steiner and Teasdale, 2019). Furthermore, it is shown by both Barraket *et al.* (2019) and Smith and McColl (2016) that rural social enterprises focus more on assets and resources available within their local community than their urban counterparts. As van Twuijver *et al.* (2020, p. 135) conclude: “the ‘rural’ appears to

be not just a residual factor but a core issue that shapes the role and form of rural social enterprises.” The fact that the activities of rural social enterprises are both enabled and constrained by material elements in their surrounding resonates with findings in the broader field of rural entrepreneurship.

Stathopoulou, Psaltopoulos and Skuras (2004) see rurality as a dynamic entrepreneurial resource that shapes the opportunities and constrains of enterprises. They perceive rurality to be constituted of three key dimensions: the physical environment (including location, natural resources and landscapes), social structures (including social capital, governance and cultural heritage) and economic structures (including investments in infrastructure, business networks and the level of information and communication technologies). Korsgaard, Ferguson and Gaddefors (2015) refer to ‘placial embeddedness’ to describe the knowledge rural entrepreneurs acquire about physical, historical and cultural landscapes through being intimately familiar with their specific socio-material surroundings. Korsgaard, Ferguson and Gaddefors (2015) conclude that this placial embeddedness is an important enabler for rural entrepreneurial activity. Finke and Bosworth (2016) use actor network theory, which allows for both human and non-human elements to be included, to analyse six rural case studies. They conclude that rural businesses adapt and enact the rural landscape in different manners and that the way in which entrepreneurs engage with the landscape and/or the values attached to that landscape is of importance for the development of the organisations. Müller and Korsgaard (2018) see the rural as a socio-material phenomenon in which geographical and social aspects are both of importance. They conclude that the spatial context in which entrepreneurs operate provides them with a set of material and immaterial resources that are uniquely connected to a certain place. The rural does not determine entrepreneurial activity but does provide structural conditions, like the geographical setting and the infrastructure and available resources connected to that, that enterprises must operate within. In the next section, it will be discussed how this multidimensional understanding of a rural place can be conceptualised.

2.2.2.2 Theorizing place

Different approaches have been taken to theorize the concept of place, both in a general and in a rural setting. In this section, an overview will be provided of some of

these conceptualisations, and the perspective on place taken in this study will be explored in more detail.

In order to capture the interwoven human and non-human elements of place, Sack (1997) proposes a relation framework to help us understand how we transform and are transformed by our geographic surroundings. This relational framework incorporates meaning, social relations and nature as three main forces that guide our action. Sack (1997) proposes that nature, that captures the physical space, in combination with the meaning we attach to it and the social relations in it together form the structure of place. More specifically related to rurality, Halfacree (2006) proposes a three-fold model of rural space, consisting of rural localities (referring to distinctive spatial practices), formal representations of the rural (referring to the way in which the rural is commodified) and everyday lives in the rural (referring to individual and social elements). As already highlighted previously, Stathopoulou, Psaltopoulos and Skuras (2004) perceive rurality to be constituted of three key dimension: the physical environment (including location, natural resources and landscapes), social structures (including social capital, governance and cultural heritage) and economic structures (including investments in infrastructure, business networks and the level of information and communication technologies). Guthey, Whiteman and Elmes (2014) develop a framework of place incorporating geographic location, locale and sense of place and emphasise the continual interaction between these different elements. Bosworth and Turner (2018) construct a 'rural capital framework' that identifies the different kinds of capital available for entrepreneurs in a rural setting. They distinguish between physical, natural, financial, human, social, organisational, cultural and symbolic capital. They argue that rural enterprises are able to make a trade-off between these capitals in order to compensate for rural disadvantages. Muñoz and Kimmitt (2019) have developed a theoretical framework including four main categories of importance for thriving rural entrepreneurship: the biophysical place (relating to the material location); the entrepreneurial locale (relating to the drivers of entrepreneurship), the entrepreneurial sense of rurality (relating to key enablers for entrepreneurship) and the rural entrepreneurial dynamics (related to entrepreneurial collaboration). Steiner and Teasdale (2019) build an exploratory conceptual framework to investigate rural social enterprises and include three domains: the rural domain, the social enterprise domain and the policy domain. In their framework, the

rural domain includes demographic and geographic aspects of the rural environment. The social enterprise domain is focussed on the dynamics related to the organisational characteristics of these organisations, while the policy domain pays attention to the institutional environment rural social enterprises operate in.

In the conceptual framework for this study, the work of Guthey, Whiteman and Elmes (2014) and the extension of their work by Kennedy, Whiteman and Schwedler (2017), will be utilized in order to conceptualize place. Guthey, Whiteman and Elmes (2014) built their framework in the context of organisational studies on sustainability. It aims to create “a place-based perspective on organisations” (Guthey, Whiteman and Elmes, 2014, p. 261), and acknowledges the reciprocal relationship between a place and the organisations residing in it. The framework of Guthey, Whiteman and Elmes (2014) is more organisation specific and therefore more suitable for the research questions posted in this thesis than for example the work of Sack (1997) and Halfacree (2006) cited in the section above, who both conceptualize (rural) place in a broader sense. By allowing for multiple levels of investigation, it furthermore incorporates a broader view on place than the perspectives of Stathopoulou, Psaltopoulos and Skuras (2004), Bosworth and Turner (2018) and Steiner and Teasdale (2019), and thus will allow for a more nuanced picture of engagement with place to emerge.

Guthey, Whiteman and Elmes (2014) incorporate three dimensions of place in their framework: geographic location, locale and sense of place (see Figure 4). The work draws on ideas of place from Agnew (1987), Massey (1994), Casey (1997) and Staehli (2003). These scholars all, in one way or another, acknowledge that place is not a static given, but that different, interacting processes shape place. Place is not merely a “canvas on which history plays out” but a dynamic, ever-evolving process (Guthey, Whiteman and Elmes, 2014, p. 257). Hence, the interaction between material and social aspects of place and organisations are the central element of focus in the framework. In this, the framework acknowledges that organisations are shaped by place, as well as shape place (in interaction with other institutions, organisations and groups).

The model of Guthey, Whiteman and Elmes (2014) is applied empirically by Kennedy, Whiteman and Schwedler (2017) in research on the implementation of a Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS) in a socially deprived urban area in England. These

authors extend the model of Guthey, Whiteman and Elmes (2014) by specifically framing it around a place-based enterprise. They interpret a place-based enterprise as an organisation that is:

“firmly rooted in and interdependent with place and practice an ethos of sustainability. They possess a distinctive sense of place and a social mission; the well-being of place is an important organizational goal, both intrinsically and for its own instrumental value in fostering organizational success” (citing Shrivastava and Kennelly, 2013, p. 91; Kennedy, Whiteman and Schwedler, 2017, pp. 167–168).

The study shows the usefulness of the framework in explaining the interaction with location specific geographical, institutional and social dynamics, and attachment to place and highlights their interconnectedness in the way in which an organisation realises improvements in a certain locality. Given that the characteristics of the place-based organisation in the study of Kennedy, Whiteman and Schwedler (2017) resemble the key characteristics of rural social enterprises as understood in this thesis, the framework seems to provide a useful basis for understanding place in the light of this study. As explained in chapter 1, the rural context, conceptualised through place, will be understood from the perspective of a “pool of resources” (Gaddefors and Anderson, 2019, p. 167; McKeever, Jack and Anderson, 2015). The three elements of place defined by Guthey, Whiteman and Elmes (2014), being location, sense of place and locale, provide a framework to understand the specific elements of the rural context mobilized and employed by rural social enterprises in their organisational endeavours. In the section below, these three dimensions of place will be discussed and elaborated upon in the light of this study (see Figure 4).

Geographic location

The geographic location represents the physical setting of place. Guthey, Whiteman and Elmes (2014) see this as the spatial coordinates of a place, and the topography that is attached to that. For them, geographic location represents objective features of a location, like an address. In relation to this study, the geographic location will also represent the biophysical aspects of the rural areas in which the social enterprises studied are based, including landscape features such as forests, lakes, and mountains. It has been shown through previous research that the natural environment can provide unique resources to rural (social) enterprises and enable as well as constrain (social)

entrepreneurial activities (Stathopoulou, Psaltopoulos and Skuras, 2004; Steinerowski and Steinerowska-Streb, 2012; Korsgaard, Ferguson and Gaddefors, 2015; Gaddefors and Anderson, 2019; Muñoz and Kimmitt, 2019).

Furthermore, location will encompass proximity, which is related to the distinction between core and periphery that, as shown in section 2.2.1.1, is of relevance for our understanding of the rural. Here, this study draws on the notion of Agnew (2011, p. 326) that location is “where an activity or object is located, and which relates to other sites or locations because of interaction, movement and diffusion between them”. So, the location of a place influences its relationship with other places. The discussion on core and periphery (section 2.2.1.1) showed that rural areas have the disadvantage of being located in the periphery, while power and resources are located in the core (Stathopoulou, Psaltopoulos and Skuras, 2004; Anderson and Lent, 2017). Hence, the physical proximity of rural social enterprises to other important material, social and institutional elements can influence the availability of these elements to the rural social enterprise. So, in this study, the geographical location will be interpreted as the spatial location of place and the landscapes and natural resources attached to that and will include physical proximity to important stakeholders and resources that results from this location.

Sense of place

Guthey, Whiteman and Elmes (2014) see sense of place as the meaning people attach to place. They argue that by attaching different values to a place, different behaviour towards this place will be induced. In that way, emotional and symbolic meaning can tangibly shape the landscape, for example through the built environment. According to Shrivastava and Kennelly (2013, p. 84) sense of place is “a personal connection with place, encompassing feelings of identity with and attachment to a place”. A sense of place thus represents the interpretations, emotions, meaning and identity attached to place that contributes to its social and material construction (Guthey, Whiteman and Elmes, 2014; Kennedy, Whiteman and Schwedler, 2017). Given that rural social enterprises are found to operate from a strong sense of community (Senyard *et al.*, 2007; Calderwood and Davies, 2012), the attachment to place is of relevance for the way in which entrepreneurial developments are shaped (Guthey, Whiteman and Elmes, 2014; Muñoz and Kimmitt, 2019). The way in which a rural social enterprise is attached to the locality in which it operates, and how this relates to the attachments

of place from community members, is of influence on the activities undertaken (van Veelen and Haggett, 2017). Place attachment can refer to both emotional attachments, e.g. an affective bond with a place like feelings of pride, and functional attachments, e.g. reliance on the physical attributes of place (Kibler *et al.*, 2015; van Veelen and Haggett, 2017). Thus, this part of the framework is focused on how the identity attached to a place and specific place attachments of groups and/or individuals are deployed by rural social enterprises.

Locale

In the framework of Guthey, Whiteman and Elmes (2014) locale is the social and cultural setting in which activities occur. It embodies both the informal and institutional aspects of a place that shape values, attitudes and behaviour (Agnew, 2011) and the material setting for social relations (e.g. the built environment or roads) (Gieryn, 2000; Thomas and Cross, 2007; Shrivastava and Kennelly, 2013). In this, it takes into account the history, politics, culture, economics, community and organisations residing in a place. Given that this is a broad spectrum of elements, previous research on rural social enterprises will be used to specify elements of locale that will serve as a starting point for the empirical investigation.

Research on rural social enterprises has taken interest in the role of institutional relations in the development of rural social enterprises (Lang and Fink, 2019; Chatzichristos and Nagopoulos, 2020). It shows that institutional support, both in the form of financial and technical assistance by governmental organisations (Farmer, Steinerowski and Jack, 2008; Smith and McColl, 2016; Mazzei and Roy, 2017; Steiner and Teasdale, 2019), and in the form of sectoral support organisations (Gordon, 2002; Liddle, McElwee and Disney, 2012; Wallace *et al.*, 2015; O'Shaughnessy and O'Hara, 2016a) are of great importance for the emergence and development of rural social enterprises. Furthermore, previous research shows that the informal and formal social networks of rural social enterprises, both within and outside their community, play an important role in mobilizing resources (Haugh, 2007; Vestrum, 2014; Vestrum, Rasmussen and Carter, 2017; Richter, 2019). Involvement of the local community (Smith and McColl, 2016; Barraket *et al.*, 2019), among others by drawing on local volunteers (Haugh, 2007; Ludvig *et al.*, 2018), was discussed in chapter 1 (section 1.2) as an important characteristic of rural social enterprises. The value of these social connections, the trust and cooperation arising from them, and the resources that can

be mobilized through them are often discussed under the term social capital (Timberlake, 2005; Lang and Fink, 2019)¹¹. Closely connected to social capital is human capital. Where social capital refers to the connections between individuals, human capital refers to the skills and experience of the individual inhabitants of a place (Timberlake, 2005), and incorporates for example local knowledge about the history or natural environment of a place (Bosworth and Turner, 2018). Next to social capital, previous research shows that human capital, in the form of experienced and/or skilled individuals that the rural social enterprise can draw on, forms a valuable basis for rural social enterprise development (Steinerowski, Jack and Farmer, 2008; Bosworth and Turner, 2018; Douglas, Eti-Tofinga and Singh, 2018). A final element of importance in the locale of a rural social enterprise is the material setting, including for example historical and/or cultural significant buildings (Gieryn, 2000). Previous research suggests that the material setting of a place can enable and/or constrain entrepreneurial activities (Bosworth, 2012; Aiken, Taylor and Moran, 2016; Muñoz and Kimmitt, 2019). So, institutional relations, social capital, human capital and material settings are all identified by previous research as elements of the rural locale that influence rural social enterprise endeavours, and therefor will guide the understanding of locale in the remainder of this study.

Geographic location, sense of place and locale represent three aspects of place that potentially can be utilized by rural social enterprises in their organisational endeavours. Hence, they represent (potential) resources embedded in place. Taken together, these three elements form a distinctive, unique setting that is called place. As shown in Figure 4, in the light of this study, place is thus understood as a unique configuration of (potential) resources available to rural social enterprises.

¹¹ See page 55 for a discussion on the relation between the perspective of social capital and a multidimensional understanding of place.

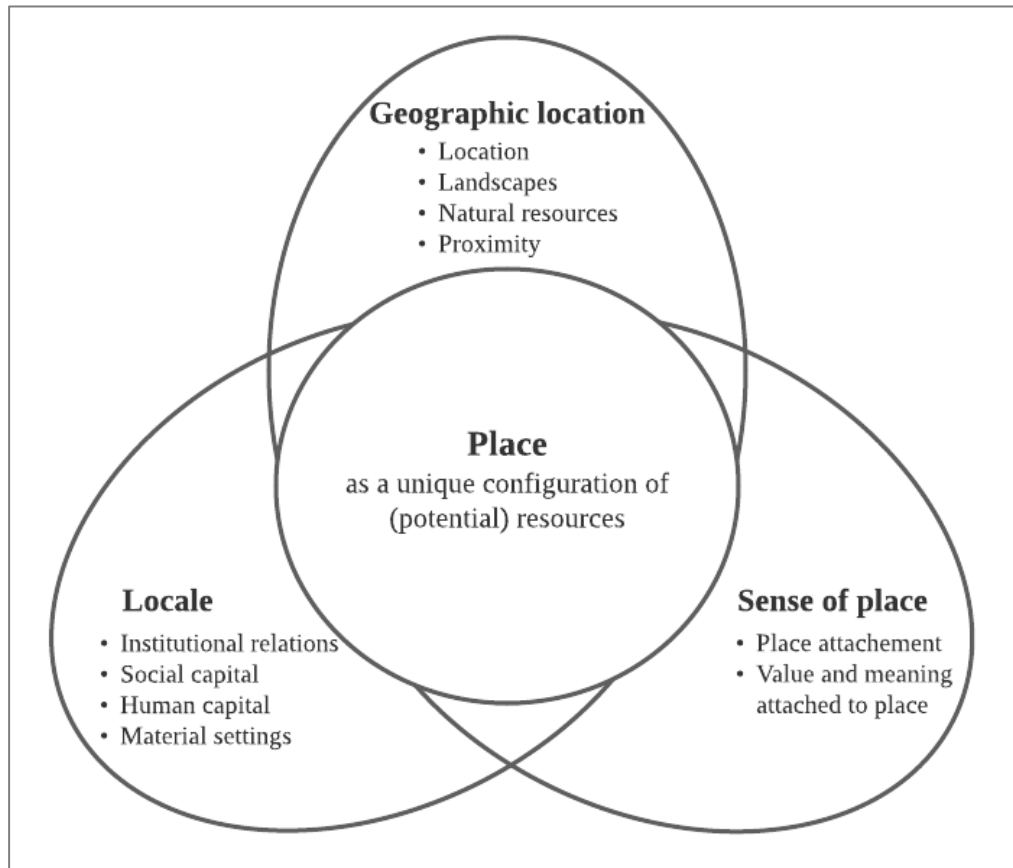


Figure 4: The interrelated elements of place. Based on Guthey, Whiteman and Elmes (2014) and Kennedy, Whiteman and Schwedler (2017).

2.3 Conceptual framework

In chapter 1, the overall aim of this thesis was described as exploring how rural social enterprises operate in a rural context. In this light, two research questions were proposed. The first research question is aimed at investigating what capabilities rural social enterprises develop in relation to the management of their hybrid resources base. The second research question is aimed at exploring how rural social enterprises engage with their rural context. In the current chapter, it has been proposed that Resource Orchestration Theory (ROT) and the concept of place provide useful concepts to guide empirical data collection in order to formulate answers to these two research questions. So far, ROT and place have been discussed separately. The aim of this section is to combine the two in order to establish the conceptual framework for this thesis.

According to ROT, rural social enterprises need to combine the resources available to the organisation in a meaningful way to be able to fulfil organisational goals. In order to do so, they need to develop dynamic capabilities, understood as those organisational processes and routines that enable the resource orchestration process (Helfat *et al.*, 2007; Haugh, 2009; Sirmon *et al.*, 2011). Part of the resources utilized by rural social enterprises originate from the rural context in which they operate. These organisations are namely found to have a strong local focus (van Twuijver *et al.*, 2020), and an ability to mobilize local (underutilized) resources (Di Domenico, Haugh and Tracey, 2010; Barraket *et al.*, 2019). In engaging with their rural context, rural social enterprises actively draw on elements of this context in their organisational endeavours. This act of engagement is a reciprocal process between a rural social enterprise and the rural place in which it resides. Rural social enterprises are shaped by the resources and structures available in that specific setting, but, in actively utilizing these contextual factors in their organisational endeavours, they also (re-)shape their rural surroundings (McKeever, Jack and Anderson, 2015; Gaddefors and Anderson, 2019). Hence, through the orchestration of their resource base, rural social enterprises do not only draw on resources embedded in their place, but also alter these resources.

In order to conceptualize the rural context, and the different elements in that context that rural social enterprises can draw on, this chapter has proposed to use the human geographic concept of place. Following Agnew (1987), Guthey, Whiteman and Elmes (2014) and Kennedy, Whiteman and Schwedler (2017), place is understood as being

built up out of three dimensions: geographic location, sense of place and locale. Geographic location refers to the landscapes and natural resources of a certain location, and the proximity of this location to other places. Sense of place refers to the identity and meaning attached to place and the attachment of both individuals and groups to a certain place. Locale refers to the institutional relations, social capital, human capital and material settings of a place. Each of these elements represent (potential) resources for a rural social enterprise. These elements intersect in a specific 'place', a place that thus represents a unique configuration of (potential) resources for rural social enterprises. Hence, the conceptual framework as depicted in Figure 5 emerges. This framework shows the reciprocal character between the rural social enterprise and the place in which it operates. This framework will form the basis for the empirical data collection and analysis. How data collection and analysis are conducted will be explained in detail in the following chapter.

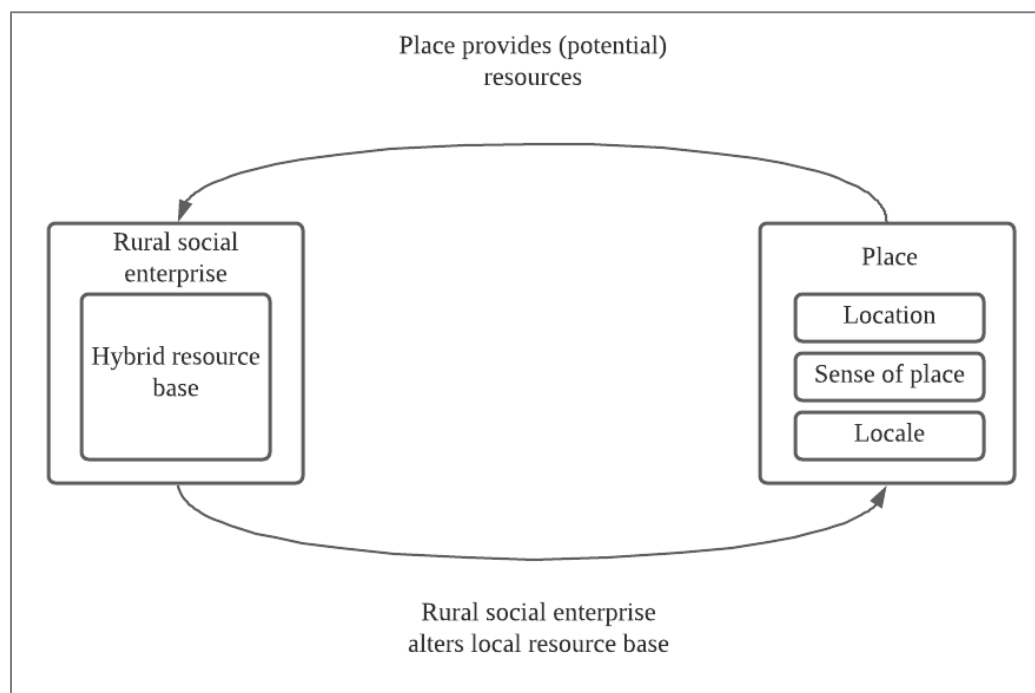


Figure 5: Conceptual Framework.

Chapter 3: Research Design

In this chapter, the methodological design chosen to execute the empirical study is explained. This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section (section 3.1) will describe the philosophy of science, which will explain the ontological and epistemology underpinnings of the study. In the second section (section 3.2), the methodological approach taken to operationalize the conceptual framework and address the research questions is discussed. This section will also explain methods of data collection and analysis and reflect on the methodological limitations and mitigating actions taken.

3.1 Philosophy of science

A philosophy of science has three main elements: ontology, epistemology and methodology (Healy and Perry, 2000). Ontology refers to fundamental “questions of being” (Marsh and Furlong, 2002, p. 185). It relates to questions around the nature of reality and what we can know about this. Considering the ontological position of a study is important because it guides the objects and elements that are considered appropriate for studying and it directs the assumptions made about the nature of these objects (Archer, 1995; Al-Amoudi and O’Mahoney, 2015). An epistemological point of view is related to what we believe we can know about this world, and the relationship between “the knower” and “the known” (Marsh and Furlong, 2002, p. 185). It defines the relationship between the world and the researcher, and formulates a way in which we can gain an understanding of the world as described in the ontological position (Healy and Perry, 2000). The third element of importance in a philosophy of science is the methodology. This refers to the techniques used to investigate the world around us (Healy and Perry, 2000). The methodology relates to the epistemology since the way we believe we can gain knowledge about the world around us guides what techniques are appropriate to utilize during an empirical investigation.

Different combinations of ontological and epistemological assumptions, and the methodological commitments that follow from that, can be distinguished. This leads to different ‘modes of engagement’ between the researcher and the phenomenon under study (see Table 3) (Johnson *et al.*, 2006; Kesseba, Awolowo and Clark, 2018). Through the decades, a positivist mode of engagement has dominated science (Ackroyd and Fleetwood, 2000; Healy and Perry, 2000). In positivism, it is assumed

that objects (both natural and social) exist independently from our perceptions and observations of them. Objects are assumed to be governed by universal laws that are expressed in terms of event regularities (Healy and Perry, 2000; Aliyu *et al.*, 2014). A second mode of engagement, called neo-empiricism, also acknowledges a world that is independent of our perceptions of it. However, it deviates from a positivist point of view in assuming that human behaviour is not pre-determined, but produced and reproduced through social interaction (and is thus inter-subjective) (Johnson *et al.*, 2006). This provides a basis for an emphatic understanding of human behaviour, in which qualitative methods are utilized to understand how research subjects experience the world around them (Johnson *et al.*, 2006; Kesseba, Awolowo and Clark, 2018). In this, an objective epistemological view is adopted, in which there is a separation between “the knower” and “the known” (Marsh and Furlong, 2002; Johnson *et al.*, 2006). A third mode of engagement is labelled critical theory (Johnson *et al.*, 2006). Just like the previous two perspectives, this perspective holds a realist ontological view to the (social) world. However, in contrast to neo-empiricism, this perspective holds a subjectivist epistemological position, meaning it views every account of a researcher as socially constructed. Every account might thus reflect power arrangements and interest (Sminia, 2009; Duberley, Johnson and Cassell, 2012), and hence, the possibility of neutral observations is refuted (Johnson *et al.*, 2006). A final mode of engagement that is distinguished by Johnson *et al.* (2006) is that of affirmative postmodernism. Just like in critical theory, affirmative postmodernism rejects the possibility of objective knowledge. However, affirmative postmodernism also questions the existence of a (social) reality outside of the observer, and thus holds a subjectivist stance towards reality. From this point of view, it is assumed that the (social) world is socially constructed, meaning that the world only exists through our perception of it and is an “outcome of discursive practices” (Johnson *et al.*, 2006, p. 136; Sminia, 2009). In Table 3 an overview is provided of the different ontological and epistemological stances utilized in management research, and the four different ‘modes of engagement’ these combinations result in (Healy and Perry, 2000; Maxwell, 2004; Johnson *et al.*, 2006). In this study, a realist ontology is combined with an objectivist epistemology, resulting in a neo-empiricist study¹² (Johnson *et al.*, 2006;

¹² The realist ontology followed in this study is linked to ‘Critical Realism’, allowing for a deep stratified understanding of reality, and emphasizing the importance of the historical, cultural and socio-political context of the research setting. Even though Critical Realism has commonalities with critical

Kesseba, Awolowo and Clark, 2018). Hence, this perspective will be explored in more depth in the remainder of this section.

<i>Modes of engagement</i>	<i>Ontological status of social reality</i>	<i>Ontological status of human behaviour/action</i>	<i>Epistemology</i>	<i>Methodological commitments</i>
Positivism	Realist	Determined	Objectivist	Quantitative methods to enable <i>erklären</i>
Neo-empiricism	Realist	Meaningful / inter-subjective	Objectivist	Qualitative methods to enable <i>verstehen</i>
Critical Theory	Realist	Meaningful / inter-subjective	Subjectivist	Qualitative methods to enable a structural phenomenology or critical ethnography
Affirmative Postmodernism	Subjectivist	Discursive / inter-subjective	Subjectivist	Qualitative methods to enable deconstruction

Table 3: Ontological and epistemological positions in management research. Based on Johnson *et al.* (2006, p. 134, table 1).

3.1.1 Neo-empiricism

3.1.1.1 Realist ontology

This study is rooted in a realist ontology. A fundamental belief in realism is that the world exists independent of our observations of it (Sayer, 1992; Ackroyd and Fleetwood, 2000; Al-Amoudi and O'Mahoney, 2015). At the same time, neo-empiricism acknowledges that we can only understand this world through our perception of it (Johnson *et al.*, 2006; Vincent and O'Mahoney, 2018). Given that there is a real world outside of our perception, whilst our perception is the only way to understand this world, we are likely to perceive only part of the world (Vincent and O'Mahoney, 2018). Underlying this is the stratified nature of the world (Collier, 1994; Danermark *et al.*, 2002). This stratification is made up of three levels (Bhaskar, 1978; Leca and Naccache, 2006; Easton, 2010; Fletcher, 2017) (see Figure 7). The first level is the empirical level. This is the level of our experience, of thoughts, beliefs

theory, as both have a certain amount of emancipatory power, they are not necessarily the same (Whelan, 2019). Thus, in this study, a Critical Realist ontology is combined with a modified objectivist epistemology (Healy and Perry, 2000), making the study most in line with a neo-empiricist mode of engagement as distinguished by Johnson *et al.*, (2006).

and human knowledge. Events on this level are always perceived through human interpretation. The second level is labelled the actual. This is the space in which events occur, irrespective of people's presence. We do not perceive the events on this level directly. We only observe a certain amount of them on the empirical level. The third level is labelled the real. This level is made up out of objects and structures and their associated mechanisms. Events happen if mechanisms cause interaction between different objects and structures. These three elements (objects, structures and mechanisms) are thus interrelated. *Objects* are material entities (e.g. a tree) or immaterial entities (e.g. social class) and can even possess both characteristics (e.g. a contract) (Easton, 2010; Vincent and O'Mahoney, 2018). Each object has unique causal powers and liabilities that represents their power to act and bring about change (Bhaskar, 1978; Easton, 2010). For example, it is assumed that people have causal powers (e.g. being able to speak, work or reason) and causal liabilities (e.g. "susceptibility to group pressure") (Sayer, 1992, p. 105). *Structures* are "sets of internally related objects or practices" (Sayer, 1992, p. 92). This can be social structures, like positions, relationship and conventions (Al-Amoudi and O'Mahoney, 2015). For example, the relation between a landlord and a tenant, that assumes a certain structure of private property, payment of rent, etcetera (Sayer, 1992). Hence, a structure can be built up out of multiple other objects. An organisation, for instance, is a conglomeration of, among others, individual people and resources (Vincent and O'Mahoney, 2018). Structures, like an organisation, cannot be explained solely by the activities of the objects that compose them (e.g. people and resources). These structures possess powers of their own that are irreducible to the sum of the objects composing them. These powers are also called emergent powers, given that they emerge from the structure (Al-Amoudi and O'Mahoney, 2015). For example, in the relationship between the landlord and the tenant used previously, the power to collect rent from the tenant is not related to the individual characteristics of landlord, tenant or building, but derives from the structure between them (Sorrell, 2018). Objects and structures exercise their power and liabilities through *mechanisms* (Fletcher, 2017; Vincent and O'Mahoney, 2018). A mechanism is understood as "nothing other than the ways of acting of things" (Bhaskar, 1978, p. 14). It is "that which can cause something in the world to happen" and can take many forms (Danermark *et al.*, 2002, p. 55). The mechanisms referred to by realists are for example norms (Danermark *et*

al., 2002), personality and attitude (Sayer, 1992), laws and regulations (Vincent and O'Mahoney, 2018) or capabilities (Daniel, Ward and Franken, 2014). Mechanisms relate different objects and structures to each other (Vincent and O'Mahoney, 2018) (see Figure 6).

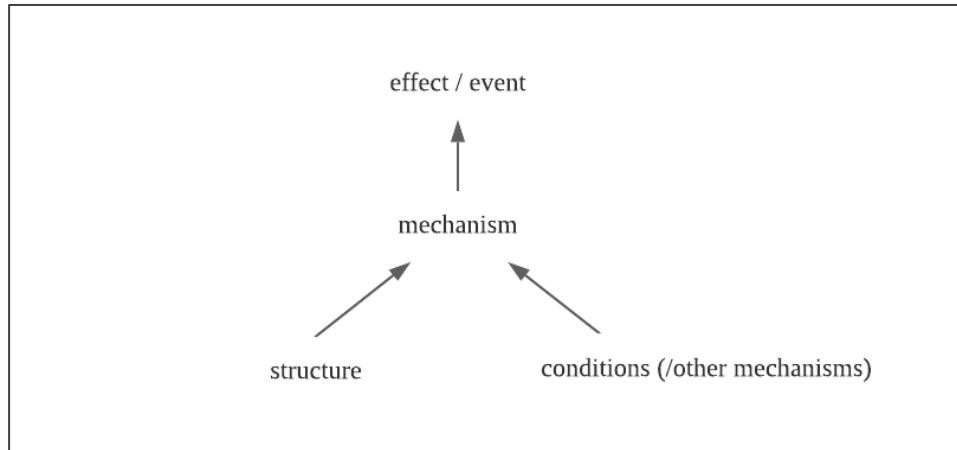


Figure 6: Structures, mechanisms, events (Source: Sayer, 1992, p. 15).

This notion of causal powers and liabilities highlights the point of view of realism towards causality. In the thinking on realism followed in this study, causality does not entail a direct cause and effect relationship between discrete events (like in a more positivist stance), but it is related to the ways-of-acting of objects and structures (Sayer, 1992; Easton, 2010). From that point of view, the world does exist, not of events that can be explained by laws of regularity but, of objects that possess a specific set of tendencies, liabilities and powers (Bhaskar, 1978; Easton, 2010). This makes that researchers following this line of thought are not interested in prediction, but in explanation of the objects in play and the way in which they behave (Johnson *et al.*, 2006; Al-Amoudi and O'Mahoney, 2015; Fletcher, 2017). From this point of view, social science should explore the connections behind the experiences in the level of the empirical to get an understanding of the mechanisms at play in the level of the real (Sayer, 1992; Ackroyd and Fleetwood, 2000).

At this point, it is important to note that causal powers are transfactual (Leca and Naccache, 2006), meaning that they exist even if they are not exercised (Vincent and O'Mahoney, 2018). A person for example, has the power to speak, but can choose to remain silent and hence, not exercise the power to speak. And even if a certain power is exercised, it does not automatically mean the power is also actualized (i.e. coming

into being, being materialised) (Vincent and O'Mahoney, 2018). Whether a causal power or liability is actualized, is dependent on external conditions, created by the interaction between other objects (with their own causal powers and liabilities) (Sayer, 1992; Danermark *et al.*, 2002). These objects can cause counteracting powers that prevent the actualisation of another power. In this, the world is perceived as an open system, meaning that it can never be predicted beforehand which mechanisms and powers are at play (Bhaskar, 1978; Fletcher, 2017). This indicates that, depending on the conditions, the same mechanism can produce different empirical events and different mechanisms can produce similar empirical events (Sayer, 1992; Bergene, 2007).

Summarizing this, the point of view held in this study assumes that our (social) world is “a stratified and open system of emergent entities” (Vincent and O'Mahoney, 2018, p. 3). Interaction between mechanisms and objects/structures in the level of the real, causes events in the levels of the actual and empirical. The objects, structures and mechanisms in the level of the real are impossible to observe directly. We only perceive their outcomes in the form of the events experienced in the empirical level. In that sense, the empirical level can be perceived as the tip of an iceberg (Fletcher, 2017) (see Figure 7). This makes the goal of social science to map the bottom of the iceberg as accurately as possible.

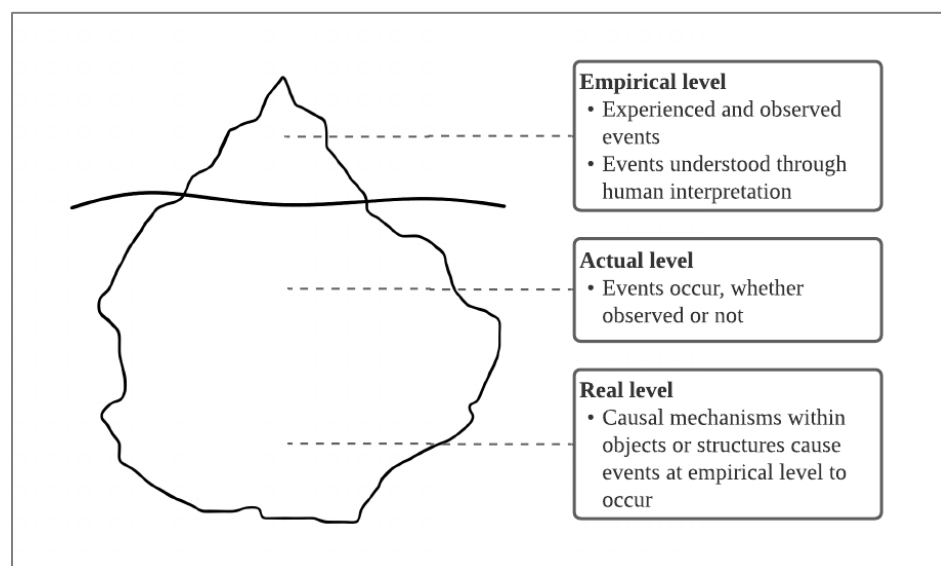


Figure 7: An iceberg metaphor for the Realist Ontology, according to Fletcher (2017, p. 183).

3.1.1.2 Objectivist epistemology

In the previous section it was established that a neo-empiricist point of view assumes that there is a world that is independent from our identification of it, hence, it holds a realist ontological stance. However, it is also acknowledged that we can only identify the world and the objects in it through our own perceptions. Our understanding of this world is formed through social interaction, and is not pre-determined, but inter-subjective (Johnson et al., 2006; Kesseba, Awolowo and Clark, 2018). A neo-empiricist stance holds that a neutral understanding of this world can be achieved. It is the aim of a social researcher to understand the meaning of actions and behaviours through the eyes of the actor(-s) involved, and to translate this into theory that is grounded in empirical observations (Johnson and Duberley, 2003; Kesseba, Awolowo and Clark, 2018). This fits well with the aim of this study, which is to understand how rural social enterprise are able to operate within the rural context in which they are situated.

To come to neutral research findings that are grounded in empirical observations, a neo-empiricist view holds that in the research process, the researcher remains separate from the ‘objects’ of research. Hence, there is a distance between “the knower” (the researcher) and “the known” (that what is researched) (Marsh and Furlong, 2002; Kesseba, Awolowo and Clark, 2018). In adopting a “third-person point of view”, the researcher aims to create an unbiased, neutral account of the observed phenomenon, while taking into account the (social) setting in which the research takes place (Johnson *et al.*, 2006, p. 138; Duberley, Johnson and Cassell, 2012).

Based on the realist ontology followed in this study, it is acknowledged that the world is an open and stratified system, in which multiple explanations of events are possible. In acknowledging this, the form of objectivism practiced in this study is best characterized as “modified objectivism”, in which the goal is to form a neutral understanding of the phenomenon under study, but in which it is accepted that alternative explanations of the findings are possible (Healy and Perry, 2000, p. 119). Such an acknowledgement has consequences for the methodological processes followed, and will be discussed further in section 3.2.3.4, and in section 3.4, where verification of the research process and findings are discussed.

3.1.2 Anchoring the conceptual framework in the philosophy of science

The overall aim of this thesis is to provide an empirical exploration of how rural social enterprise operate within a rural context. According to the philosophy of science adopted in this study, the focus of investigation should not be on the actual events perceived, in this case on the fact that there are social enterprises operating in rural regions, but on the underlying mechanisms that enable and explain these events (Easton, 2010). The research questions proposed in chapter 1 are designed to guide attention to the mechanisms that enable the operations of rural social enterprises. The first research question is aimed at investigating the capabilities developed to deal with a hybrid resource base. These organisational capabilities can be understood as the mechanisms that allow for an effective utilization of the hybrid resource base (Daniel, Ward and Franken, 2014; McAvoy and Butler, 2018). The second research question is aimed at understanding how rural social enterprises engage with place, and therefore connects organisational behaviour directly to the context in which it takes place. It aims to understand the mechanisms through which rural social enterprises utilize and enhance resources embedded in place. As brought forward in chapter 1, the research questions assume a reciprocal relationship between rural social enterprises and the place in which they operate. Hence, underlying the research questions are dynamics of agency and structure. In this, engagement is perceived as an act of agency (Gaddefors and Anderson, 2019) and place is understood as a structure (Agnew, 2003)¹³. The general description above does not yet answer how this interplay between agency and structure should be understood. To better understand these dynamics, the next section will discuss the way in which the relationship between structure and agency can be theorized by examining the morphogenetic/morphostatic approach of Margaret Archer (1995).

3.1.2.1 Morphogenetic / Morphostatic approach

Even though realism assumes that there is a world independent of our perception of it, this does not mean that we as human beings do not have an ability to alter the world. As Bhaskar (1978, p. 117) states: “Men are not passive spectators of a given world,

¹³ From an ontological perspective, the social and the natural world are often (unconsciously) separated. See appendix 1 for a discussion on this, and on the motivation to include the material elements of place in the understanding of structure as is done in this study.

but active agents in a complex one”. Margaret Archer (1982, 1995) developed the morphogenetic/morphostatic approach (hereafter M/M approach), as a meta-theory to explain the relation(s) between agency and structure, and better understand social change (Porpora, 2013). The M/M approach “seeks to develop concepts of the *various* relationships between structure and agency which help to explain why particular cases are the way they are” (Parker, 2000, p. 71, italics in original). Archer (1982, 1995) developed the M/M approach to understand how social organisation takes place and why it emerges (Archer, 2011). In short, the morphogenetic approach assumes that society has no pre-given form, but that it takes shape through the intended and unintended consequences of actions of agents (Archer, 1995; Horrocks, 2009). Within the approach, structure and agency are perceived to be ontologically different constructs. Even though they are heavily intertwined, they are “analytically separable” (Archer, 1995, p. 66).

According to Archer (1995, p. 257) agents are “collectivities sharing the same life chances”¹⁴. She does not accept that agents are all equal, but makes a distinction between primary agents and corporate agents (Archer, 1995, 2002) and acknowledges that people can display a different kind of agency in different situations (Horrocks, 2009). Primary agents are “inarticulate in their demands and unorganized for their pursuit” (Archer, 1995, p. 185) whereas corporate agents articulate their demands and pursue them in an organised manner. “Primary agents collectively transform themselves into corporate agents” when striving for societal change (Archer, 2002, p. 17). So, by being organized, corporate agents are able to change structure and thus influence the context in which all agents operate. In their organisational endeavours, rural social enterprises can be perceived as corporate agents, and thus have the ability to influence the rural context through their actions. Hence, the M/M approach offers ontological depth to the notion that rural social enterprises can contribute to positive rural development.

According to the M/M approach, the concept of place as utilized in this study can be understood as a structure. Structure refers to relations in “the material dimension of social life”, for example “the distribution of resources, the mutual implications of

¹⁴ Besides the collective role of agents, Archer does distinguish individual roles within the M/M approach. Namely those of human beings and social actors.

roles, institutional positions and their internal coordination and, at the most general level, relations among institutions” (Parker, 2000, p. 79). In line with the broader critical realist ontology, structure is dependent upon actions of agents, but it is more than just a sum of these actions (Al-Amoudi and O’Mahoney, 2015). It possesses distinct properties on its own (McAnulla, 2005). Archer (1995) furthermore nuances the understanding of structure by making a distinction between culture and structure. Structure is understood as the objective or material¹⁵, where culture relates to the subjective or ideological (Porpora, 2013). By distinguishing structure, culture and agency, the M/M approach acknowledges that incentives for social change can arise in all three of these domains¹⁶. This is reflected in the conceptualisation of place that is adopted in the conceptual framework in this study, which recognizes both material and ideological elements of place, with location and locale presenting the structural elements, and sense of place relating to ideological elements.

According to the morphogenetic cycle (see Figure 8), structure and culture are built up by actions of past actors. Therefore, they pre-date the actions that transform it and structural/cultural elaboration post-dates these transformative actions (Archer, 1995; Horrocks, 2009). In the morphogenetic cycle, this is captured by the notion of *structural conditioning*, which represents the historical distribution of resources and power. This is followed by a phase of *interaction* in which agents undertake action to rearrange this distribution. Even though agents are conditioned by structure and culture, there is a certain freedom to decide how they react in a given situation (Vincent, 2008). The outcomes of the actions undertaken by agents, be it intentionally or unintentionally, modify structure and/or culture by reproducing them, called *morphostatis*, or by elaborating/altering them, called *morphogenesis*. So, people reproduce rather than produce structure and culture, and the M/M approach is

¹⁵ The definition of ‘material’ is generally vague in discussions on structure. In this thesis, structure is understood as encompassing both social structures as well as the natural and built environment. See section 3.1.2.2 for a further explanation of this.

¹⁶ By distinguishing structure, culture and agency, the M/M approach acknowledges that emergent properties can arise in all three of these domains. Therefore, the basic morphogenetic/morphostatic cycle as shown in Figure 8 is applicable to structure, culture and agency, resulting in three cycles that have a certain autonomy, but are heavily interrelated. Here, autonomy relates to the idea that all three cycles can have an influence on the process of structuration. It is however a “relative autonomy”, meaning that their influence depends on their relationship with the other two cycles (Parker, 2000, p. 84). These three cycles are connected through their common element: people. Archer (Archer, 1995, p. 194) argues that this three-fold distinction makes it possible to analyse “the dynamics by which the ‘parts’ and the ‘people’ shape and re-shape one another through their reciprocal interaction over time”.

interested in understanding when transformation rather than reproduction takes place (Archer, 1995). In this, the M/M approach provides a framework to investigate how rural social enterprises are able to alter elements of their rural context. The research questions posed in this thesis focus on mechanisms that enhance the agency of rural social enterprises and enable their transformational power of place. The first research question, focused on the dynamic capabilities that underlie orchestration of the hybrid resource base, aims to uncover the mechanisms that enable rural social enterprises to utilize the configuration of resources available to them¹⁷. Hence, it addresses (some of) the mechanisms that enable these enterprises to undertake action (and thus, focussing on the second phase of the morphogenetic cycle; the phase of socio-cultural interaction). The second research question links this action to the external environment of the organisation, by investigating the mechanisms that allow for engagement with place. This engagement with place, which in terms of the M/M approach can be understood as an act of agency within both structural and cultural elements of place, can thus result in a reproduction or a transformation of rural place. The M/M approach draws attention to the fact that rural social enterprises operate in a setting characterised by a historical distribution of resources and power, and hence guides empirical data collection to not only focus on the (current) actions of rural social enterprises, but also on the circumstances under which these actions take place.

¹⁷ In this study, dynamic capabilities are understood to be mechanisms from a micro-foundational point of view, as discussed by Gerring (2008). Capabilities are the “individual building blocks” of social action (Gerring, 2008, p. 176). These capabilities shape the interplay between different social actors (e.g. the rural social enterprise and its stakeholders) and between actors and their context (e.g. rural social enterprise and different elements of their context) and hence, are instrumental in shaping an (intended) outcome.

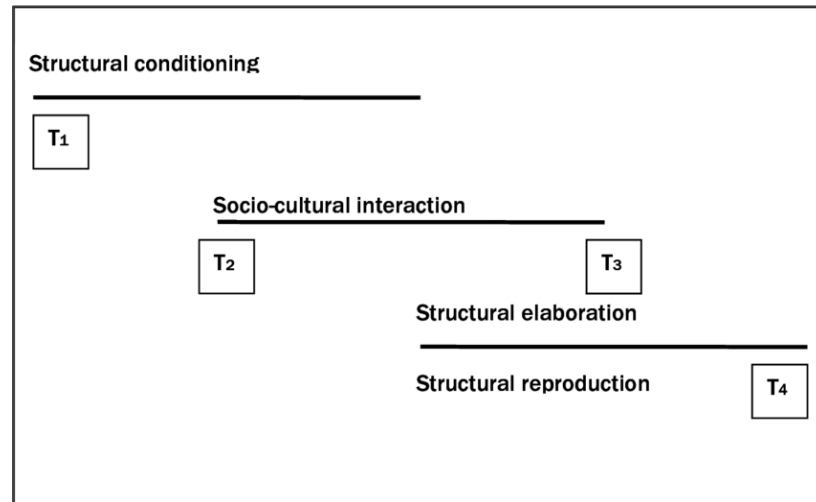


Figure 8: The basic morphogenetic/static cycle with its three phases.
 Source: Archer (1995, p. 157, figure 6).

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 Research design

In critical realism, a distinction is made between extensive and intensive research (Sayer, 1992; Easton, 2010). Extensive research is concerned with discovering general patterns of a population or their common properties. Large-scale surveys, questionnaires and statistical analysis are much used methods in an extensive research design (Sayer, 1992). Intensive research is focused on the way in which causal processes work out in a particular case (or in a small number of cases). Here, a small number of cases in a population would be studied in depth in order to analyse interdependencies between different relations and activities (Sayer, 1992; Ackroyd and Karlsson, 2014). In this type of study, methods like interviews and participant observations are more appropriate. Given that the current study is focused on gaining an in-depth understanding of the mechanisms that support the operations of rural social enterprises, an intensive research design utilizing qualitative research methods is found most appropriate (Sayer, 1992; Johns, 2006). This, since qualitative methods “help to clarify complex relationships and processes that are unlikely to be captured by predetermined response categories or standardised quantitative measures” (Parr, 2015, p. 196). A qualitative research design allows for the generation of in-depth and rich information, and for a context-sensitive investigation (Parr, 2015; Hu, 2018). The qualitative design chosen in this study is explained in more depth in the following subsection.

3.2.2 Case-study design

The focus of inquiry of this study are the capabilities developed by rural social enterprises to manage their hybrid resource base, and the mechanisms through which they engage with place. In the discussion on the philosophy of science, in section 3.1, it was brought forward the not only the actions of rural social enterprises matter, but also the circumstances under which these take place, hence making context specific circumstances a key point of focus (Bergene, 2007; Blundel, 2007). A case study is suitable to investigate the phenomena under study in their natural environment, hence, taking into account the specific factors that give the case its “signification” (Danermark *et al.*, 2002, p. 158; Ackroyd and Karlsson, 2014). It provides the opportunity to generate an in-depth understanding of the phenomena under study and of the contextual factors of influence on the phenomena (Easton, 2010; Parr, 2015). Furthermore, a case study will allow to take into account the dynamic nature of organisational hybridity, by allowing for both historical and real-time data to be incorporated, instead of being confined to a single snap-shot in time (Hall, 2006). It also allows to explore multiple levels of analysis, hence focus on the interplay between the rural social enterprise and elements of place. Thus, a case study approach is found to be the most suitable approach to the empirical data collection of this study (Vincent and O’Mahoney, 2018).

As explained previously, the aim of this study is not to uncover regularities or universal laws, but to look for mechanisms and underlying structures that affect outcomes at a specific place and time (Sayer, 1992; Hesketh and Fleetwood, 2006; Hu, 2018). In the case of this study, the aim is to create insight into the capabilities developed to manage a hybrid resource base and forms of engagement with place developed by rural social enterprises. In uncovering such mechanisms, different authors propose that a comparative case study design is beneficial (Danermark *et al.*, 2002; Bergene, 2007), since it will allow for a deeper understanding of the inherent attributes of mechanisms and their properties (Ackroyd and Karlsson, 2014). Cases are selected based on a similarity in the structure that is of interest to the researcher (Danermark *et al.*, 2002; Bergene, 2007), in this case, social enterprises operating in a rural setting. If cases have this similar structure, but are different in other elements (e.g. the sector in which they operate), this provides an opportunity to see how different mechanisms and structures might be of influence on the phenomenon under

study (Danermark *et al.*, 2002; Ackroyd and Karlsson, 2014). In this sense, comparison is a way to strengthen the validity of the study (Bergene, 2007; Ackroyd and Karlsson, 2014). In this study, two rural social enterprises were selected for empirical investigation. The process of case study selection is explained in the following subsection.

3.2.2.1 Case study selection

As highlighted in the previous section, case studies are not chosen randomly, but are selected based on the belief that they can add to our understanding of the phenomenon under study (Bergene, 2007). In this study, rural social enterprises that clearly show elements of hybridity in their resource base are selected. Generating data that is rich enough to encompass the dynamics and different levels of analysis incorporated in the conceptual framework is an elaborate process. Hence, data collection is limited to two case studies. This is a compromise between being able to collect in-depth data and having the ability to compare different settings. In this, the design resonates with the realist understanding of using a case study design “to gain knowledge about causal relationships through in-depth analysis of a few selectively chosen cases” (Bergene, 2007, p. 14; Ackroyd and Karlsson, 2014).

In the process of selecting the case studies, a local development company acted as a field-expert and source of information and contacts. During the duration of the research project, the researcher has been affiliated with this local development company (see appendix 8 for further explanation). The organisation works within a predominantly rural area in the MidWest of Ireland (Bertolini and Peragine, 2009; Copus *et al.*, 2011; O’Hara and O’Shaughnessy, 2016), counting a population of 66,748 people (2016) (Meredith, 2018). In the region, the biggest part of the population lives outside towns (an average of 70% between 1991 – 2016) (Meredith, 2018), signalling the high level of dispersed villages, settlements, and single dwellings that characterise the region. Traditionally, the region had a strong agricultural profile, mainly reliant on the dairy industry (Walsh, 2000). Restructuration of the agricultural sector has provided the region with significant challenges over the years. Furthermore, the region has to deal with challenges related to infrastructure, inadequate access to services (e.g. public transport), social isolation, an aging population and limited access to broadband. Given the strong rural profile of the region and the ability to get access to an extensive network of individuals, organisations (incl. social enterprises) and

local and national authorities through the local development company, the selection of cases focused on social enterprises in this geographic area. The local development company organises different training/workshop sessions (some specifically for social enterprises) and networking events (either regional or sectoral) throughout the year. This provided the researcher with the opportunity to get in touch with different social enterprises in an informal way. Case selection followed a three-folded process. First, based on the conceptual framework and methodological considerations, three broad selection criteria for case study selection were established. First, the organisations need to be a social enterprise according to an academic definition. In this study, the ideal type definition of Defourny and Nyssens (2014) is used for that purpose (see appendix 2 for a discussion on this definition). Second, organisations need to be based in and operate the majority of their activities within a rural setting. This to ensure that the social enterprises have a rural character, in line with the research questions set out for this study. Third, because the need to understand developments over time, the organisations need to be established for at least 5 years. As a second step in the case selection process, a list of social enterprises within the region that fitted the categories outlined above was made. The researcher examined the different organisations on this list in more depth, through internet-searches and through informal conversations with members of the organisations directly (these organisational members were met at the different events of the local development company). During these conversations, the researcher discovered that two social enterprises, Cúram CLG and Scéal Development, were both, independently from each other, starting a process to develop a new organisational strategy. In informal conversations with organisational members of these organisations, several elements related to organisational hybridity in the resource base got the researcher's attention. Given that the development of an organisational strategy in rural social enterprises is closely linked to elements of hybridity, strategic choices concerning the current and future resource base and interaction with the rural context¹⁸, it provided an interesting setting to collect real-time data in light of the research questions.

¹⁸ An organisational strategy can be understood as “the central, integrated, externally oriented concept” of how an organisation will achieve its objectives (Hambrick and Fredrickson, 2005, p. 50). A strategy is an important means to define the relationship between the organisation and its environment (Bourgeois, 1980). Internally, it links the mission and objectives of an organisation with the organisational functioning. A strategy is used by organisational members to make sense of developments in the external environment of the organisation and to design a response to these

Furthermore, because the researcher has a Master of Science degree in Strategic Management, both managers of the social enterprises voiced their interest in involvement of the researcher in some form within the trajectory. Hence, this provided the researcher with an opportunity to gain access to the organisations. Most importantly, both organisations fall within the selection criteria as outlined above (also see Table 4) and they have a complementary set of characteristics (in terms of organisational scale and sector of operations), making them suitable case studies. Hence, the possibility of conducting research within the organisations was discussed with the managers of the two social enterprises. The managers were informed on the background of the research project and of the type of data the researcher intended to collect. Both managers responded positively to the proposal and saw added benefit of having the researcher involved in the organisation. On both occasions, the board of the organisation was asked for approval for participating in the study, which in both cases was granted. In both organisations, the managers would remain the gatekeeper and main point of contact during the period of the study. Key characteristics of both organisations, organised according to the ideal type definition of social enterprise as proposed by Defourny and Nyssens (2014) can be found in Table 4.

(MacKay and McKiernan, 2004; Hambrick and Fredrickson, 2005; Nadkarni and Barr, 2008). As noted in chapter 1, the hybrid nature of rural social enterprises makes that strategy making is characterized by a high level of complexity (Moizer and Tracey, 2010; Doherty, Haugh and Lyon, 2014). This process is a focal point of hybridity because multiple interpretations of the organisational values, its mission, key resources and the most appropriate way forward come together. It also provides a roadmap of how the organisation perceives it can best engage with its rural context and which opportunities, threats and barriers are perceived in this context. Hence, it provides an interesting focal point for dynamics of relevance to the research questions central to this thesis.

Governance	High degree of autonomy.	Official autonomy from public or private bodies.	Official autonomy from public or private bodies.
	A decision-making power not based on capital ownership.	No share capital. Voluntary directors operating on a one person one vote principal.	Co-operative society (appr. 100 members) operating on a one person one vote principle.
	A participatory nature which involves various parties affected by the activity.	Operated by a voluntary board of directors from the community being served.	Operated by a voluntary board of directors from the community being served, yearly AGM for all members.

Table 4: Key characteristics of case organisations according to ideal type definition of social enterprise (Based on Defourny and Nyssens, 2014).



van Twuijver, M. W. 2021. Rural social enterprise: an exploration of hybridity and engagement with place. PhD Thesis, University College Cork.

Please note that Section 3.2.2.2 (pp. 85-97) is unavailable due to a restriction requested by the author.

CORA Cork Open Research Archive <http://cora.ucc.ie>

3.2.3 Data analysis

With this study being focused on the generative mechanisms underlying social processes, two forms of data analysis are linked to this: abduction and retroduction³³ (Danermark *et al.*, 2002; Ackroyd and Karlsson, 2014; Vincent and O'Mahoney, 2018; Hoddy, 2019). Abduction is a process through which empirical events are abstracted into a more general description, in search for a new understanding of these events (Danermark *et al.*, 2002; Vincent and Whapshott, 2014). It involves a constant interaction between theory and empirical data, which makes that the process is characterised “by modifying, elaborating upon, or rejecting theory if needed, or putting old ideas together in new ways to examine, understand, and explain the data” (Kennedy and Thornberg, 2018, p. 52; Bergene, 2007). Where abduction is focused on uncovering “the most plausible explanation of the mechanisms that caused the events” (O'Mahoney and Vincent, 2014, p. 22), retroduction is aimed at the uncovering the prerequisites for these mechanisms to act the way they do (Sayer, 1992; Danermark *et al.*, 2002; Belfrage and Hauf, 2017).

Given that in this study, the focus lies on uncovering the capabilities supporting the management of a hybrid resource base and the mechanisms through which rural social enterprises engage with place, an abductive analysis has been conducted. As highlighted above, this process of analysis is not a linear sequence of the different stages of analysis, but is a creative process characterised by reiterative loops between stages. A feature of abduction is a constant iteration between theory and empirical data (Kennedy and Thornberg, 2018). This means that changes in the conceptual framework are made throughout the research process, “because it is not clear in the early stages of research what causal mechanisms there are, let alone how they work” (O'Mahoney and Vincent, 2014, p. 4). This process of iteration was also observed in this study, and the conceptual framework described in chapter 2 could be considered a product of this process as opposed to the initial starting point. In Figure 9, a visualisation is presented that represents the research process and that shows the most important iterations made during the process of analysis (see iterations A, B, C and D

³³ Different scholars describe a significant overlap between the processes of abduction and retroduction (Danermark *et al.*, 2002; Hoddy, 2019), yet because there are also subtle differences (Sayer, 1992; Belfrage and Hauf, 2017), for the sake of clarity it has been decided to describe them separately.

in Figure 9). In the subsections below, the process of data analysis and these iterations will be explained in more detail.

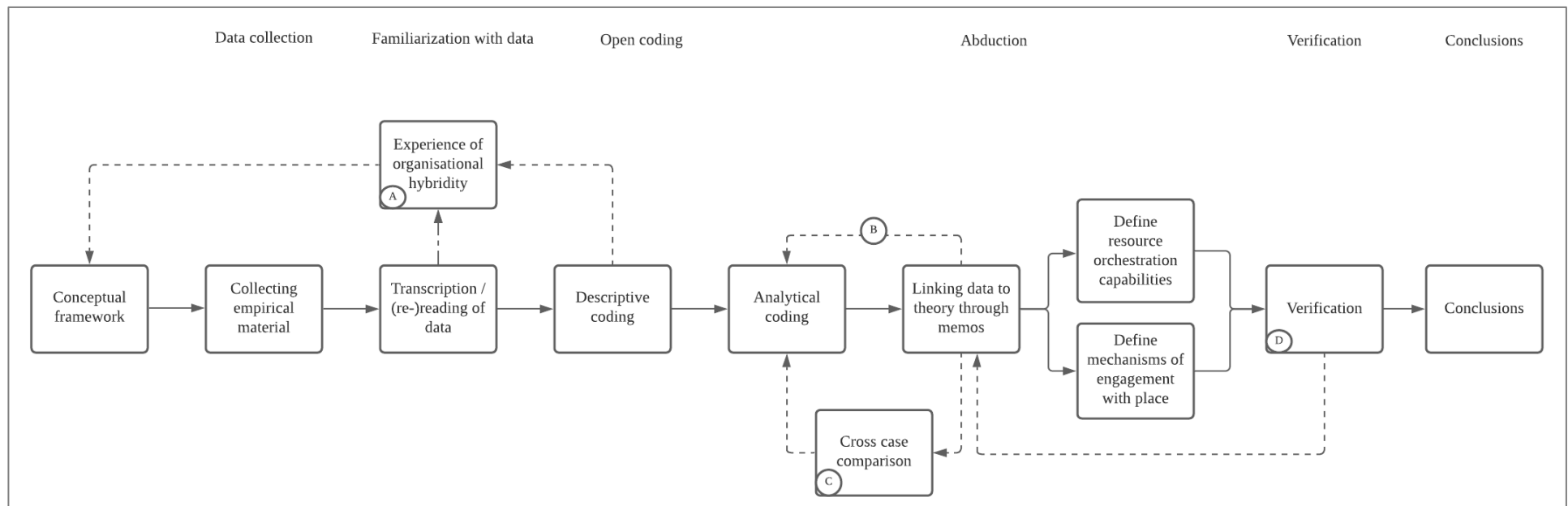


Figure 9: Process of data analysis.

3.2.3.1 Familiarisation with data

Familiarisation with the data already started when preparing data for analysis. For example, the writing of fieldnotes from observations was a good moment to conduct a first preliminary analysis of the data gathered (Mulhall, 2003), with theoretical links being noted down in a separate paragraph in the field notes, and important events/information highlighted by the researcher for future data collection (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2001). The transcriptions of interviews, notes and documents were read and reread (in most cases multiple times) in order for the researcher to get familiar with the data (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Re-occurring topics and elements that stood out to the researcher were noted in separate reflective notes, which were bundled in a research diary (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Nadin and Cassell, 2006). While this diary started as a simple tool for the researcher to bundle notes and observations in one accessible place, it would prove to be a useful tool throughout the process of analysis in order to trace common themes in thoughts and observations that could be elaborated upon during the analysis. All data was transferred into the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software NVivo 12.

3.2.3.2 Open coding

In order to be able to develop an abductive analysis, it was necessary to create an understanding of the key components of the data in relation to the research questions (Easton, 2010; Bygstad and Munkvold, 2011). This was done through a process of open coding of the data in NVivo (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The open coding was spurred by a small initial set of codes taken from the conceptual framework and allowed further codes to emerge from the data. At this stage, codes were descriptive and/or processual in nature (Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 2014) and focused mainly on grouping information related to different organisational activities, structures and roles, types of stakeholders, types of interaction with stakeholders, types of interaction with elements of place and types of resources in the organisation. Different visual data displays were utilized in order to capture chronological developments and changes over time (e.g. timelines and network diagrams) (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Paavilainen-Mäntymäki and Welch, 2013; Maxwell and Chmiel, 2014b)³⁴. The data was collated into written thick descriptions for both cases, in which the core chronology of organisational evolution was established (Pettigrew, 1979; Rowlinson, Hassard and Decker, 2014). By tracing

³⁴ Given that NVivo 12 has limited possibilities for organising data in a chronological fashion, visual data displays were either hand drawn or compiled in Microsoft Word/PowerPoint/Lucid and added in NVivo to link to further analysis.

processes of incremental change and distinguishing critical organisational events (understood as decisive or pivotal moments in organisational development), the chronological order was divided into strategic periods (Plourde, 2013; Haider, 2014; Blundel and Lyon, 2015). By ordering the data into strategic periods, dynamics of change and stability could be observed more easily in the remainder of data analysis (Hassett and Paavilainen-Mäntymäki, 2013), which helped in defining capabilities developed in relation to the orchestration of the hybrid resource portfolio and in the final presentation of the data/findings.

The process of open coding, which was started while data collection was still ongoing, gave rise to the first major iteration in the analysis (see iteration A in Figure 9). When data collection started, this was guided by a broad research question related to the role of organisational hybridity in the organisational activities of rural social enterprises. The initial conceptual framework underlying data collection was leaning on neo-institutional theory and an understanding of organisational hybridity in social enterprises from the point of view of institutional logics. As discussed in chapter 2 (section 2.1.1), this is in line with the dominant theoretical perspective in research on organisational hybridity in social enterprises. However, through the process of data collection, re-reading of the collected empirical material and the initial stage of open coding, the researcher discovered that the experience of organisational hybridity of organisational members was not always in line with the social versus economic dyadic that institutional logics relates to hybridity in social enterprises. In some instances, interview participants clearly distinguished between social and economic motivations for actions and (potential) tension between them, but more often, the data (interviews, observations, documents) showed that social and economic dimensions were strongly related to each other (even integrated) and participants voiced that one dimension would not lead to success without the other. In some instances, when the researcher asked directly if a tension between social and economic goals was experienced, interview participants reacted in a manner contradictory to the typical perspective on hybridity as described in literature, like in the following excerpt of an interview transcript:

Researcher: What a lot of researchers write about that, is that that can be a real tension, between the community element and the business side. Is that something you experience here?

Mia (employee Scéal Development): No, I don't think so. Maybe, it might be the odd time kind of thing. But no, I haven't really [noticed]. No, no, I don't think there is.

Similar responses were received during interviews in the other case organisation, Cúram. This made the researcher evaluate her initial understanding of organisational hybridity rooted in institutional logics and led to an exploration of theories which allowed for a more neutral conceptualisation of hybridity, that allowed for both the tensions and the synergies related to organisational hybridity to emerge from the data. At this stage, the focus shifted to an understanding of hybridity as a cross-sectoral phenomenon, and the research questions were focused and adjusted in line with this (see chapter 1, section 1.3.3 for the final research questions). With a few months of data collection remaining, this shift also informed the remaining data collection and enabled the researcher to become more specific in the gathering of empirical material. The adjustments made are in line with the philosophy of science of this study, by acknowledging the lived experience of research subjects (Lacey, 1998; Johnson *et al.*, 2006; Fletcher, 2017), and acknowledging that the conceptual understanding of the researcher changes through involvement in the empirical setting (O'Mahoney and Vincent, 2014). In this, initial theories can be seen as a starting point for empirical investigation but an open mind needs to be kept to different theoretical perspectives that might better reflect the empirical setting investigated (Bhaskar, 1978; Fletcher, 2017), a principle that has been followed in this study.

3.2.3.3 Abduction

The initial codes generated through open coding were merged into more analytical codes representing abstract themes (see appendix 7 for more information on the process followed). Pattern coding was used in order to reduce the amount of open codes and identify re-occurring dynamics and interplay between codes (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Easton, 2010; Elliott, 2018). Just as with open coding, visual data displays (timelines, tables and figures) were utilized in order to discern patterns between different codes. Furthermore, in order to help to move from descriptive to analytical thinking and explore different theoretical perspectives on, and explanations of, the data, memos were written in which theory and data were linked to each other (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Easton, 2010; Kennedy and Thornberg, 2018). To stimulate this iteration between theory and data, the researcher constantly asked herself what concepts were needed to fully understand the empirical material and the potential underlying mechanisms and structures (O'Mahoney and Vincent, 2014). These concepts would form the subject of memos, which allowed to develop these ideas more fully (or conclude that the ideas needed to be discarded). Notes from the research diary were important in linking different ideas, gathered throughout the process of analysis, and often spurred inspiration for memos and

further analysis. The visual data displays, memos and codes evolved together, resulting in multiple rounds of adjustment to the analytical codes (see iteration B in Figure 9).

In order to create an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of the two different cases, each round of coding was done individually for both cases, before comparing the codes and themes distinguished between the cases. This is in line with a realist comparative case study approach as proposed by Bergene (2007). According to this approach, comparison is not aimed at finding patterns of similarity, but it is seen from a theoretical perspective, in which empirical material from the cases is compared to theory (or different theories) in order to discern the function of different elements and processes in individual cases. By comparing the ways in which these elements and processes work in the different cases, more in-depth and contextualised knowledge can be created about the underlying mechanisms and structures (Danermark *et al.*, 2002; Bergene, 2007). In this study, this was for example achieved when through subsequent rounds of pattern coding and the analytical memos it became apparent that in both individual cases adaption of organisational structures, processes, and roles in order to support resources mobilization and utilization was a prominent theme. By subsequently comparing similarities and differences between the cases, the researcher became aware of the importance of developing a number of capabilities related to the resource orchestration process, hence, allowing the researcher to analytically move from the observed events, to the underlying mechanisms (in this case the developed capabilities) (see iteration C in Figure 9). Through the iterative process of analysis, second-order and third-order constructs were developed, resulting in a set of 5 capabilities, supported by 12 micro-foundations and 6 mechanisms for engagement with place which will be presented in chapter 5.

3.2.3.4 Verification

Given that it is an aim of realism to approximate the real world as closely as possible, there is a need for a way to evaluate the accuracy of different accounts of reality (Rutzou, 2016; Hu, 2018). In this light, Sayer (1992) proposes the concept of ‘practical adequacy’. He postulates that to be useful “knowledge must generate expectations about the world and about the results of our actions which are actually realized” (Sayer, 1992, p. 69). Hence, practical adequacy relates to the fit of a theory to our expectations of the world and the outcomes of the activities undertaking in it. Yet, practical adequacy does not only relate to the output of a theory, it also relates to the assumptions and concepts that form the input. Hence, “a theory must be adequate to practical research, whilst also serving the purposes of theoreticians, such as revealing

something not previously known” (Olsen, 2008, p. 14). Thus, theories must be robust in different contexts and be consistent with other knowledge (Sayer, 1992).

In order to determine if the results of this study are indeed practically adequate, several steps were undertaken. First of all, analysis and outcomes have been presented at several academic conferences and seminars, providing an opportunity for academics familiar with the field of (rural) social enterprises to provide feedback on the study and its outcomes (see appendix 8 for an overview of conferences and training school participated in over the course of this study). This way, the fit of the study with current knowledge could be considered (Sayer, 1992). Second of all, the results of the study have been discussed with two regional development experts. These experts had not been actively involved in data collection. Given that they both have a vast experience (15 years of more) of working with social enterprises in a rural setting, their perceived ‘fit’ of the study results with their experience provided a means of considering the practical value of the results. Feedback from both the academic and the practitioner perspective helped develop and sharpen the outcomes generated (see iteration D in Figure 2).

3.2.4 Methodological reflections

This section of the chapter will discuss the concepts of validity, generalisability and reliability in relation to the conducted study, in order to explain how the researcher ensured that the findings presented in this thesis provide adequate evidence for an answer to the research questions. Furthermore, the final section of this chapter will deal with methodological limitations related to this study.

3.2.4.1 Validity

The internal validity of a study is related to its accuracy and “how well the research represents the actual phenomenon” (Morse, 2015, p. 1213). Given that a critical realist point of view attaches importance to context-specific dynamics, validity has to be assessed not just based on the methods and procedures used to conduct the research, but according to the purpose with, and the context within, which these are applied (Maxwell, 2017). Below, this will be discussed in relation to the collection of data and the analysis of data.

Measure to ensure validity in data collection

In relation to data collection, a recognized way to increase validity of a study is by collecting a rich and diversified dataset (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Morse, 2015). By collecting data through three means (interviews, participants observations, documents), the researcher was able to investigate different perspectives on the case organisations (Healy and Perry, 2000) and

hence ensure richness of data (Maxwell, 2004). Moreover, by collecting data on an organisational level, but also including sectoral information and geographic information concerning place in the data set, a contextualised analysis has been possible (Healy and Perry, 2000; Maxwell, 2017), adding to the richness of the data. For all three individual forms of data collection, separate measures have been taken to enhance the validity of the data. These will be discussed below.

Interviews

With interviews in general, one has to be mindful of the subjectivity of the participants (Diefenbach, 2009). It is not uncommon that, consciously or unconsciously, interviewees do not provide truthful or complete information, for example, due to wanting to answer in a socially acceptable fashion or driven by particular personal interests. In general, information from interviews needs to be cross-checked with other interviewees and/or other sources of data (Flick, 2004; Diefenbach, 2009). In this study, triangulation took place between the individual interviews, and also with the other forms of data collection (Flick, 2004).

Special caution is necessary in interpreting the data from the interviews that focus on retrospective developments. Due to selective memory, developments can be recalled differently than they happened (Golden, 1992). Given that with some interviewees, developments of more than a decade ago were discussed, this effect had to be mitigated for during the analysis of the data. Retrospective interviews were structured around concrete events and actual behaviour (instead of around beliefs), making a recall bias less likely (Miller, Cardinal and Glick, 1997; Berends, van Burg and van Raaij, 2011). Furthermore, several measures of triangulation have been taken. First of all, due to the fact that numerous interview participants have been involved with their organisation for an extended period of time, there was large overlap between the time-periods that organisational members were involved in the organisation. Hence, multiple participants were able to provide their perspective on organisational developments and critical organisational events, making it possible to cross-check information received from different interviewees (Miller, Cardinal and Glick, 1997). Second of all, the information gathered through the interviews was cross-checked with other types of information, like the documents gathered (Miller, Cardinal and Glick, 1997; Flick, 2004). Third of all, for the main part of the retrospective interviews, previous chairpersons of the case organisations were selected. Because of their responsibilities during a certain time-period, they are more likely than other organisational members to recall the main developments of that period (Flick, 2004).

Participant observations

In itself, the use of participant observation has been a way to enhance the validity of the overall dataset, given that “observations may help the researcher have a better understanding of the context and phenomenon under study” (Kawulich, 2005, pp. 4–5), and hence improves the overall quality of data collection (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2002).

A possible threat to the validity of observations lies in the fact that people might act differently when they know they are observed (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982; Kawulich, 2005). Taking notes during observations is an obvious reminder for people that the researcher is observing, and can create negative emotions (e.g. insecurity, embarrassment, distrust) (Goffman, 1989; Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2001). Therefore, the researcher mainly noted down key words and expanded these into elaborate notes at a later stage (Mulhall, 2003). In this, the researcher also adapted to the situation; if other participants in a meeting were taking many notes, the researcher also permitted herself to take more elaborate notes. When other participants did not take as many notes or note taking was impractical (e.g. during a standing meeting), key information was written down in a private location during or right after the observation (e.g. in the car at a parking lot). In all cases, in order not to forget the meaning of the notes, they were written out into elaborate field notes in Microsoft Office Word within 24 hours after the observations took place (Walford, 2009).

Furthermore, it must be acknowledged that while the researcher participates in meetings and events, her own assumptions and feelings influence the observations (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2002; Kawulich, 2005). In writing the field notes, the researcher distinguished between observations and own thoughts and feelings, by noting down the thoughts and feelings in a different font colour at the end of the notes (Kawulich, 2005). To further distinguish between thoughts/feelings and actual observations, the researcher wrote the former in first person and the later in third person (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2001; Mulhall, 2003). After writing the field notes, the researcher read them back to make sure that the third person descriptions did not contain assumption about thoughts and feelings of others (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2001; Mulhall, 2003)

Documents

Next to the (retrospective) interviews and participant observations, documents have been gathered as part of data collection, both recently created and archival documents. Documents are created by actors with a different agenda in mind than the researcher. This is a big difference

with traditional (real-time) qualitative research in social sciences, where the data is usually directly created by the researcher, for example through interviews or observations (Kipping, Wadhwani and Bucheli, 2014). However, archival documents, and the context in which they are created, are not controlled by the researcher, but “are, for the most part, natural and authentic elements of past social worlds” (Bryant, 1994, p. 7). They can be characterized as “nonintentional social documents” (Rowlinson, Hassard and Decker, 2014, p. 257), in which it should be clear the author of the document more than likely had a certain intention with creating the document, however, there was probably no research intention. Additionally, archival documents are produced in a context that is different from the current context, which must be taken into account in their interpretation (Wadhwani and Jones, 2014). So, with the available documents, the researcher had to be mindful of the process of interpretation and contextualisation. In order to be able to correctly interpret the meaning of archival documents used, and hence to also create insights into the limitations of what they can tell, the researcher practiced ‘source criticism’ (Rowlinson, Hassard and Decker, 2014). Source criticism refers to a critical examination of the origin of a historical document, the information it contains and relation to other pieces of information (Kipping and Lamberg, 2017). It is important to create a picture of the original author of the source, in order to judge if this person can be deemed competent to discuss the issue at hand, how author and content are related, what likely biases will be, and to be mindful of reasons to manipulate the content of the message (Kipping, Wadhwani and Bucheli, 2014). The researcher was mindful of these elements, and actively gathered information on author, audience, and purpose of the documents. Interviews and participants observations were used to contextualise documents. The researcher for example probed interviewees for the role of certain (key) documents at the time they were produced.

Measure to ensure validity during data analysis

In the process of data analysis, a particular threat to validity in critical realist research in general, and in the process of abduction used in the analysis in particular (Kennedy and Thornberg, 2018), is that there might be legitimate alternative explanations for the study findings. Given that creating awareness of alternative explanations by oneself can be a difficult task (Miles and Huberman, 1994), the researcher has sought feedback from external parties throughout the study (Maxwell, 2004). First of all, feedback was sought from academic peers on multiple occasions through both academic conferences and the seminars and training sessions organised by the RurAction network (see appendix 8). The feedback received when presenting parts of the analysis and preliminary findings made that the researcher had to

consider alternative explanations and theories. Furthermore, from a practice perspective, feedback was also sought on the (preliminary) findings of the study from two regional development experts, both with more than a decade of experience in supporting rural social enterprises. Hence, through discussions with peers and experts external to the study, both from an academic and a practice perspective, the researcher was challenged to consider alternative explanations for her findings, and hence increase the validity of this study.

3.2.4.2 Generalisability

With the above discussion focussing on internal validity, questions of external validity, also referred to as generalisability, are also of importance (Maxwell, 2017). Generalisability is related to how well the study results can be transferred to settings other than those directly studied (Maxwell and Chmiel, 2014a; Morse, 2015). In qualitative research, two types of generalizability are of relevance: internal generalizability, concerned with the level of representativeness of the data for the specific case(s) studied, and external generalisability, related to how well the findings represent cases outside the research sample (Johnson *et al.*, 2006; Maxwell and Chmiel, 2014a; Schreier, 2018).

Internal generalisability is linked to how confident the researcher can be that the collected data actually captures the diversity of the specific setting studied (Maxwell and Chmiel, 2014a). With respect to the two case organisations studied for example, it is unlikely (and unnecessary) that the researcher has captured every single action of the organisation in relation to resource orchestration and engagement with place, given the long time period of organisational activities studied. However, by collecting data from a range of internal and external organisational stakeholders and combining real-time observations with information from the interviews and archival documents, a diversified data sample has been collected that enables the researcher to capture both critical events and incremental changes. Hence, the researcher feels confident that a sufficient level of internal generalisability is realized through the strategy of data collection followed. Furthermore, a lack of attention to the diverse perspectives in data can pose a threat to internal generalizability (Welch *et al.*, 2011; Maxwell and Chmiel, 2014a). As indicated in section 3.2.2.2, the perspectives of multiple stakeholders, both internal and external to the rural social enterprises, have been included in the data sample. Moreover, with the focus on organisational hybridity in this study, understanding different perspectives was an important part of data analysis, with codes like ‘contradictory perspectives’ and ‘internal tensions’ capturing these dynamics. Hence, the study allowed for diverse perspectives to emerge from the data.

External generalisability refers to how research findings relate to cases outside the research population. An often-voiced criticism of case study research, particularly that with a low number of cases like the current study, is that the findings are not empirically generalizable to a larger population (Welch *et al.*, 2011; Maxwell and Chmiel, 2014a). However, several scholars argue that the strength of case studies lies not in their empirical generalizability, which requires a level of abstraction that loses contextual influences, but in their analytical generalizability, which can take these contextual influences into account (Schwandt, Lincoln and Guba, 2007; Schreier, 2018). The explanatory contribution of cases resides in their in-depth nature, which allows for an understanding to be reached of causal processes and mechanism, and the contextual factors of influence on that (Sayer, 2008; Welch *et al.*, 2011). This understanding can be applied in different situations, hence showing “qualitative research’s ability to ‘bring about a set of observations or images’ that can then facilitate ‘the search and discovery processes when examining other situations’” (referring to Eisner, 1997, p. 270; Maxwell and Chmiel, 2014a, p. 546). In this study, the conceptual framework constructed, and the findings generated through the process of abduction, provide a new point of view on the hybrid resource base utilized by rural social enterprises that hitherto remained under illuminated in research. The dynamic capabilities and the engagements with place described in the results of this study provide an indication of how rural social enterprise utilize organisational hybridity while operating in a rural setting, and hence, can provide a starting point for future research.

Another way in which scholars have looked at the contribution of case studies to knowledge, is through the concept of transferability (Maxwell and Chmiel, 2014a; Schreier, 2018). Here, the main concern is not with generalizing findings to an abstract, general population, but to a specific case. Schreier (2018, p. 86) notes that the level of transferability of knowledge from one case to another “depends on the similarity between the respective contexts. Assessing the similarity of a ‘source’ and a ‘target’ context in turn requires detailed information about the context in which the study was conducted.” To enhance the transferability of the findings of this study, the cases have been contextualised in chapter 4.

3.2.4.3 Reliability

Next to validity, reliability is an important concept in judging the quality of a study. Reliability relates to the ability to “obtain the same results if the study were to be repeated” (Morse, 2015, p. 1213), and hence is connected to consistency of a study. Given that a lack of reliability is

perceived by some as a threat to validity (Maxwell, 2017), it is not strange that many of the measures taken to increase validity (e.g. triangulation of data) are also perceived as measures to increase reliability. Therefore, here, only three specific measures will be mentioned that have not been discussed in previous paragraphs. First of all, reliability of the study is enhanced by bundling all collected data in NVivo 12. Effectively, a case database has been built that provides an overview of data utilized and main steps in the analysis (Gibbs, 2014). Second of all, a research journal has been kept during data analysis (see section 3.2.3), in order to track steps in the analysis and make coding decisions explicit. Third of all, the thick descriptions created over the course of analysis provided opportunities to check for overlap in themes in data from different sources (e.g. interviews and archival documents) (Morse, 2015) and hence make the outcomes more reliable.

3.2.4.4 Methodological limitations

In the previous sections, several limitations generally attached to case study research (e.g. a lack of generalisability) and the use of retrospective data (e.g. threats to validity) have already been addressed, and mitigating measures taken (e.g. triangulation of data) have been discussed. In relation to the conducted study, two elements will be addressed further, which is the access to data and the background of the researcher.

Access to data

All three forms of data utilized in the study (interviews, observations and documents) had their own challenges in regard to access to the data. In general, the researcher was met with a lot of cooperation in arranging interviews. However, in one case organisation, four (repeated) requests for an interview were refused, because the approached individuals indicated to be too busy. These were requests for interviews with two current board members, a current volunteer (and previous board member/chair) and the bookkeeper of this organisation. These refusals are interpreted by the researcher as telling of the pressure these volunteers experience related to balancing volunteer activities in the organisation with other obligations. In relation to participant observations, in the original research design, the researcher had planned to observe board meetings at the case organisations. This was discussed with the general managers of both case organisations when participation in the study was discussed, and at that time was agreed to by both managers. However, when data collection had started, it turned out that due to recent developments, observation of these meetings was deemed undesirable in both organisations by either the chairperson or the general manager of the case organisations. Hence, access to these

meetings was denied, and other sources of data had to be found, e.g. through interviews with individual board members, minutes of meetings, and strategic documents written by the board.

In relation to the documents gathered, as might be expected, the archival material at the disposal of the researcher can be typified as fragmented or incomplete (Wadhwani and Jones, 2014; Kipping and Lamberg, 2017). Large corporate organisations might have a professional company archive with a relatively complete selection of important documentation. However, the rural social enterprises that are the subject of research in this study did not have such archives at the disposal of the researcher. In one of the case organisations for example, part of the archive consisted of a box of documents on the attic of a board member. Moreover, some of this data was handwritten (e.g. minutes of board meetings and AGMs), making selection and analysis a tedious and time-consuming task. In the other case organisation, a ‘copy-book administration’ was maintained up until 2006, in which very little material was digitalized, hence making it challenging to retrieve certain data. This limitation could be partially mediated by drawing on the archives of external stakeholders, like the local development company and the local authority. However, the type of documents available here are of course limited to certain types of information (e.g. funding applications) and hence, it cannot be ruled out that important documents have been missed in data collection. However, by drawing on information from the interviews, the wide range of documents that was gathered and the participant observations, the researcher has been able to build a rich dataset in which the sources of data compensated for a lack of access to certain information.

In relation to the access to data, a final reflection has to be made on the fact that in both case organisations, the general managers acted as the main gatekeepers to information (e.g. in the selection of initial interview participants and gaining access to participant observations). This can lead to a risk that access is only granted to sources of information approved by management, resulting in a homogenous view of the organisation (Diefenbach, 2009; Brunninge and Melander, 2016). In the case of interviews, this could be mitigated by not only relying on purposeful sampling, but also adopting the chain referral method as described in section 3.2.2.2. Furthermore, interviewees were offered the possibility to switch off the recording device used during interviews if they felt the information they were about to share was not suitable to be recorded. Several interview participants made use of the possibility to share information in this way. Hence, by being able to draw on different types of data gathering and by putting in place measures to ensure validity and reliability of the data, the researcher has been able to gather a rich dataset to analyse in relation to the research questions.

Background of the researcher

With the emphasis that has been put on understanding the (rural) context in which the social enterprises studied work it is important to reflect on the fact that the researcher is not born and raised in Ireland, the location of study, but in the Netherlands. She moved to Ireland specifically for the research project and at the start of the study was completely new to Ireland and the Irish culture in general and to the region in particular. Being new in a country can cause several problems related to cultural distance and misunderstanding, something that can be troubling when conducting context-specific research. On the other hand, as pointed out by Welter (2016) and Chlostá (2016, p. 144) “we conduct more context-sensitive research when we are unfamiliar with a certain context”. This creates a heightened sensitivity to what otherwise might stay implicit. This argumentation is in line with the experience of the researcher. During the research process, she perceived her foreign nationality more often as a benefit than as a downside. Because she was not directly linked to any local history, participants appeared not to be hesitant to share (political) information with her in interviews. Furthermore, it provided her with the opportunity to persuade research participants to explain for them obvious elements of their context, for example, their understanding of ‘community’ (which is a word used in many different settings in Ireland) and their general ideas about the localities in which they reside. Hence, the researcher feels that her background has not led to major disadvantages in conducting this research.



van Twuijver, M. W. 2021. Rural social enterprise: an exploration of hybridity and engagement with place. PhD Thesis, University College Cork.

Please note that Chapters 4 & 5 (pp. 114-204) are unavailable due to a restriction requested by the author.

CORA Cork Open Research Archive <http://cora.ucc.ie>

Chapter 6: Discussion and conclusion

In this final chapter, the answers to the research questions will be presented and a discussion will be provided of the findings of this study in light of previous research. The preceding chapter has presented the empirical findings from the data analysis. In this chapter, these findings will be discussed in relation to other research. The first section of this chapter will present an answer to the research questions and will reflect on the theoretical contributions made by this study (section 6.1). In the following sections, policy implications of this research will be reflected upon (section 6.2), suggestions for future research will be presented (section 6.3) and the limitations of this study will be discussed (section 6.4). The chapter will end with a conclusion of the overall study (section 6.5).

6.1 Discussion

In order to fulfil the aim of this study and answer the research questions, the two research questions will first be discussed separately, before the overall findings will be reflected upon.

6.1.1 Capabilities for resource orchestration

The first research question posed in this thesis aimed to investigate the capabilities developed by rural social enterprises in the light of management of their hybrid resource portfolio. In answer to this research question, five capabilities have been differentiated in the empirical findings, supported by a total of 12 micro-foundations. These five capabilities are institutional connectivity, community connectivity, market connectivity, managing paradoxes and organisational adaptability. Institutional connectivity represents the capability to navigate and influence institutional frameworks at different spatial scales. Three micro-foundations have been found to constitute this capability: establishing and maintaining institutional relations, creating an awareness of institutional developments, and attempting to influence institutional processes through dialogue and cooperation. Community connectivity reflects the capability to establish and sustain relations with the local community, access community resources, and identify local needs. Two micro-foundations have been identified in relation to this capability: establishing and maintaining community relations and creating an awareness of community needs. Market connectivity provides the rural social enterprises with the capability to meet market requirements and to be responsive to changing market circumstances in order to sustain income

generating activities. Two micro-foundations are found to constitute this capability: an awareness of sectoral developments and the building of a balanced business case. Managing paradoxes is defined as the capability to accommodate persistent contradictions between interdependent organisational elements, and to engage with them in such a way that synergy is created. This capability is found to be supported by two micro-foundations: the aligning of stakeholders and the accommodation of long-term tension within the organisation. Organisational adaptability reflects the ability to adjust organisational endeavours in a response to changing internal and external circumstances, to circumvent challenges and to deal with setbacks. Three micro-foundations underlying this specific capability have been identified: make-do with resources at hand, adapting organisational structures and processes, and cushioning against setbacks.

These capabilities and their underlying micro-foundations represent the processes and routines developed by the rural social enterprises in relation to building, maintaining, and utilizing their hybrid resource portfolio. The capabilities signal that orchestrating the resource portfolio involves gaining access to a wide variety of resources, originating from institutional (e.g. grants, ALMPs), community (e.g. volunteer input, donations) and market (e.g. traded income) sources, and that bundling and integrating these resources so they work together is essential to effectively leverage the resources and achieve overall organisational objectives. In this, the five capabilities and their underlying micro-foundations do not operate in isolation from each other, but they influence and complement each other. Where the first three capabilities, institutional connectivity, community connectivity and market connectivity, are utilized to create and sustain relations with different stakeholder groups that provide resources to the organisation, the latter two capabilities, managing paradoxes and organisational adaptability, are essential to connect and integrate these resources in a meaningful manner that helps to realize organisational objectives and fulfil the needs and requirements of the different stakeholders involved. The latter two capabilities thus support the hybridization of the different resources. Hybridization can be understood as combining and integrating the available resources in such a way that they work together and strengthen each other, thus creating an overall resource portfolio that is stronger than when the individual resources would be utilized independent from each

other⁶¹. Together, the five capabilities thus allow the rural social enterprises to establish, maintain and leverage a hybrid resource portfolio.

In defining these capabilities, the results of this study contribute to a growing stream in literature that acknowledges the importance of capability development for social enterprises (Haugh, 2009; Bacq and Eddleston, 2018; De Silva, Al-Tabbaa and Khan, 2019; Vallaster *et al.*, 2019; Sinthupundaja, Kohda and Chiadamrong, 2020). It adds an empirical exploration of the capabilities developed by rural social enterprises, something which hitherto has been scarce. In defining specific capabilities utilized to manage a hybrid resource portfolio, the study moreover makes a novel contribution to Resource Orchestration Theory, of which the application to hybrid organisations has been very limited so far (Cui *et al.*, 2017).

The capabilities and micro-foundations distinguished concur with and combine previous knowledge on rural social enterprises. The three connectivity capabilities, institutional connectivity, community connectivity and market connectivity, resonate with previous research that shows that rural social enterprises maintain relations with a wide variety of stakeholders (Liddle, McElwee and Disney, 2012; Đurkin and Perić, 2017), in order to attract resources from different economic sectors (O'Shaughnessy and O'Hara, 2016b; Steiner and Teasdale, 2019). The different forms of connectivity can be perceived as a way to generate legitimacy with different stakeholders, which previous research has indicated to be a requisite to access resources (Cooney *et al.*, 2008; Vestrum and Rasmussen, 2013; Kibler *et al.*, 2015; Vestrum, Rasmussen and Carter, 2017).

Arising from the variety of relations with different stakeholders are different perspectives and different guides for action that need to be managed by the rural social enterprises in order to bundle the resources obtained through these relations in a productive manner. The capability of managing paradoxes reflects the long-term tensions that rural social enterprises have to deal with in the orchestration of their

⁶¹ Hybridization thus implies that effectively combined resources result in a more productive resource portfolio, as opposed to when the individual resources would be deployed independent from each other. In realist terminology, this can be explained through the concept of emergent powers (see page 70, section 3.1.1.1). The concept of emergent powers explains that structures, like in this case the resource portfolio of a rural social enterprise, cannot be explained solely by the sum of the individual objects that compose this structure. Hence, a hybrid resource portfolio cannot be explained completely by just looking at the individual resources it is composed of. According to critical realism a hybrid resource portfolio is likely to possess powers of its own, that are irreducible to the sum of the individual resources composing it (Al-Amoudi and O'Mahoney, 2015). This resonates with the findings of this study.

resource portfolio. Paradoxes are understood as “contradictory yet interrelated elements that exist simultaneously and persist over time” (Smith and Lewis, 2011, p. 382). Paradox theory has distinguished two ways to deal with organisational paradoxes, namely a traditional either/or approach, in which a choice is forced between competing demands, or an alternative both/and approach, in which integration is sought between (elements of) competing values (Smith and Lewis, 2011; Slawinski *et al.*, 2019). In striving for integrated value strategies, the rural social enterprises studied are found to adopt the latter strategy. Previous research on paradoxes in social enterprises confirms the importance of integrating different values to sustain hybridity over time (Davies and Doherty, 2019; Smith and Besharov, 2019; Vallaster *et al.*, 2019). Furthermore, previous research brings forward that dealing with organisational paradoxes requires a constant process of sense making (Jay, 2013; Smith and Tracey, 2016; Smith and Besharov, 2019). In the findings of this study, this is reflected in the micro-foundations of the capability of managing paradoxes, through which the rural social enterprises engage with stakeholders in processes of aligning different perspectives, create platforms for dialogue, and reflect on push back and on their guiding principles for action. The findings furthermore strengthen the notion that paradoxes dealt with by rural social enterprises do not just relate to different organisational goals (Smith, Gonin and Besharov, 2013; Battilana and Lee, 2014), but also incorporates paradoxes inherent in different perspectives related to (rural) place (Anderson, 2000; Slawinski *et al.*, 2019), where competing but equally legitimate demands can be made on the same space (Schad *et al.*, 2016; van Veelen and Haggett, 2017).

Furthermore, the findings show the importance of being able to (re)configure resources and organisational processes and structures in relation to changing circumstances and evolving needs. The capability of organisational adaptability is in line with previous research that suggests that in order to maintain hybridity over time, organisational flexibility is required (Blundel and Lyon, 2015; Smith and Besharov, 2019; Vallaster *et al.*, 2019). In defining the five capabilities, and providing evidence for their interrelated character, this study expands our understanding of how different elements of hybrid organisations interact, something which is recognized in previous research as necessary to progress our understanding of organisational hybridity (Maibom and Smith, 2016; Smith and Besharov, 2019).

Furthermore, the findings add a new perspective to hybridity in rural social enterprises. As discussed in chapter 1 and chapter 2, their diverse resource base is widely recognized as a key characteristic of rural social enterprises (O'Shaughnessy and O'Hara, 2016b; Steiner and Teasdale, 2019; van Twuijver *et al.*, 2020), however hybridity had not yet been utilized as a lens to investigate how rural social enterprises are able to manage the diverse range of resources originating from different economic sectors. In utilizing Resource Orchestration Theory as a framework to understand how the orchestration of a hybrid resource portfolio takes shape, attention is drawn to the capabilities developed by rural social enterprises in this light. Where most research on hybridity in social enterprises is focused on the economic means utilized to fulfil (social) organisational objectives (Smith, Gonin and Besharov, 2013; Doherty, Haugh and Lyon, 2014; Pinch and Sunley, 2015), the data presented in this study makes evident that economic means, understood as resources gained through market relations, are not the only ones utilized by rural social enterprises. Their ability to access and leverage resources through institutional and community connections forms an essential part of the resource portfolio. This concurs with findings from previous research on rural social enterprise (O'Shaughnessy and O'Hara, 2016b; Steiner and Teasdale, 2019). It is the ability to bundle the resources obtained through all three of these sources into organisational activities that support the fulfilment of organisational objectives which stimulates a hybrid way of working in these organisations. Hence, where previous research acknowledges access to a wide and diverse base of resources as an advantage of organisational hybridity (Pache and Santos, 2013b; Wry, Lounsbury and Jennings, 2014; Granados and Rosli, 2020), it is argued based on the findings presented in this study that the utilization and integration of resources belonging to different economic sectors to realize an overarching (social) objective actually defines the hybrid nature of rural social enterprises.

Next to adding to our understanding of hybridity in rural social enterprises, the five capabilities also provide insight into the resource strategies utilized by rural social enterprises. The findings concur with research on the resourcefulness of rural social enterprises (Korsgaard, Anderson and Gaddefors, 2016; Barraket *et al.*, 2019), which relates to their ability to “generate value in resource-constrained environments” (Barraket *et al.*, 2019, p. 189). In delineating five capabilities developed to manage

the resource orchestration process, this study provides insight into what enables this resourcefulness.

Furthermore, the findings provide insights into some of the resource strategies used by rural social enterprises. Several of the micro-foundations defined resonate with theory of bricolage, which is focused on understanding entrepreneurial behaviour in the light of resource scarce settings (Baker and Nelson, 2005; Senyard, Baker and Davidsson, 2009) and which has been applied to investigate the resources mobilized and deployed by social enterprises (Mair and Martí, 2006; Di Domenico, Haugh and Tracey, 2010; Ladstaetter, Plank and Hemetsberger, 2018), and to explain their innovative power and their social impact (Bacq *et al.*, 2015; Janssen, Fayolle and Wuillaume, 2018; Kickul *et al.*, 2018). Bricolage is defined by Baker and Nelson (2005, p. 333) as “making do by applying combinations of the resources at hand to new problems and opportunities”. Di Domenico *et al.* (2010) distinguish six elements of the process of bricolage in relation to social enterprises; make do with resources at hand, a refusal to be constrained by resource limitations, improvisation, a focus on social value creation, stakeholder participation and persuasion of resource providers. The findings from the current study show that in the process of resource orchestration, the rural social enterprises have developed capabilities that enable elements of bricolage. The rural social enterprises are found to make-do with the resources at hand (a micro-foundation of the capability of organisational adaptability), build a balanced business case including financial and other organisational objectives (a micro-foundation of market connectivity), and have developed capabilities to interact with different stakeholder groups (the capabilities of institutional, community and market connectivity).

Nelson and Baker (2005, p. 29) and Di Domenico *et al.* (2010, p. 18) conclude that through the process of bricolage it is possible for enterprises to “create something from nothing”. Even though it is debatable what is meant by ‘nothing’ in this statement, the findings of this study indicate that rural social enterprises build on existing elements of the rural context, and thus need a base of existing human, financial and material resources to develop. Restrictions in the availability of, or ownership over, material resources, and a lack of human resources have been found to limit organisational development in ways difficult to overcome by the rural social enterprises. Hence, the findings of this study point to the importance of existing resources to put the process

of bricolage in motion (Kickul *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, Di Domenico *et al.* (2010, p 34) conclude that social enterprises are able to move “beyond the constraints of institutional rules and structures to fashion its own bundle of resources”. The findings of this study do show that the rural social enterprises attempt to influence institutional processes and diversify income streams, however, in both cases a level of dependency in relation to key institutional resource providers remains, thus implying less independence than Di Domenico *et al.* (2010) suggest.

In answering the first research question it can thus be concluded that the rural social enterprises studied have developed five capabilities to orchestrate their resource portfolio in a way that allows them to operate within a rural setting: institutional connectivity, community connectivity, market connectivity, managing paradoxes and organisational adaptability. These capabilities underwrite the importance of maintaining relations with a wide variety of stakeholders in order to build and leverage the resource portfolio. The capabilities add to our understanding of hybridity in rural social enterprises, by showing how the capacity to orchestrate a variety of means originating from different economic sectors stimulates a hybrid way of working in these organisations. This theoretical contribution will be explored in more depth when combined with the findings from the second research question, relating to engagement with place. However, the findings of the second research question will first be discussed in their own right in relation to other literature.

6.1.2 Engagement with place

The second research question central to this thesis is focused on the way in which rural social enterprises engage with place. The findings have brought forward six ways in which rural social enterprises do so: they harness locational aspects for marketable activities; foster a collective sense of place; (re)invigorate social connections; enhance institutional relations; build on local human capital; and improve local material settings. Through these forms of engagement, different elements of place, namely locational, identity, material, social and institutional elements, are utilized by the rural social enterprises. The findings show that through the process of engagement, rural social enterprises draw on elements of place as resources in organisational endeavours, while at the same time these resources get altered and enhanced by the rural social enterprises. The findings thus provide insight into the elements of place mobilized and deployed by rural social enterprises and into how these elements get changed in this

process. In doing so, this study responds to the call from Steiner and Teasdale (2019, p. 153), who state that in order to advance our knowledge on rural social enterprises “research should focus less on single social enterprises as self-contained systems, and pay more attention to their spatial and dynamic contexts”. It furthermore makes an empirical contribution to the growing stream of literature that recognizes the reciprocal relation between organisations and the context in which they operate (Zahra, Wright and Abdelgawad, 2014; Korsgaard, Ferguson and Gaddefors, 2015; Mazzei and Roy, 2017; Gaddefors and Anderson, 2019).

The results relating to the second research question are in line with previous research in the field of rural entrepreneurship, that points to the importance of “placial embeddedness” in entrepreneurial endeavours in a rural context (Korsgaard, Ferguson and Gaddefors, 2015, p. 586; Muñoz and Kimmitt, 2019). This placial embeddedness is understood as an “intimate knowledge and use of the (local) physical, cultural and historical landscapes and the concern shown for the well-being of the places” (Korsgaard, Ferguson and Gaddefors, 2015, p. 586). The findings thus reinforce the image that there is a strong relation between rural social enterprises and the places in which they operate (Smith and McColl, 2016; Barraket *et al.*, 2019; van Twuijver *et al.*, 2020) and hence agree with Lang and Fink (2019, p. 158) who argue that “the concept of rural social enterprise is inherently linked to place”. In defining six different forms in which rural social enterprise engage with place, and by exploring the link between organisational hybridity and this engagement, this study moreover provides insight into how this relation takes shape. Furthermore, the notion of the rural context providing both enabling and constraining factors to entrepreneurial endeavours is confirmed by the findings (Farmer, Steinerowski and Jack, 2008; Steinerowski and Steinerowska-Streb, 2012; Steiner and Teasdale, 2019). In chapter 1 of this thesis, it was brought forward that Steinerowski and Steinerowska-Streb (2012, p. 178) attribute an “adaptive capacity” to rural social enterprises. They conclude that it is through this capacity that rural social enterprises are able to modify their behaviour to overcome challenges related to structural features of their context. In revealing five capabilities utilized by rural social enterprises to orchestrate their resource portfolio, and in exploring how these relate to their engagement with place, the findings from this study contribute to demystifying this adaptive capacity. The findings show that by establishing connectivity on an institutional, community and market level, and hence

having the capability to attract and generate a variety of resources, the rural social enterprises are able to circumvent structural challenges related to place. Yet, just as Steinerowksi and Steinerowska-Streb (2012), this study concludes that some structural challenges, mainly related to geographic location and material aspects of locale, are difficult to overcome for the rural social enterprises, stressing the need for suitable support to help rural social enterprises deal with the disadvantages created by this.

The ways of engagement with place distinguished in this study are in line with previous research that has shown that interaction with institutional partners (Seelos *et al.*, 2011; Lang, Fink and Kibler, 2014), relationships within the community and social bonds (McKeever, Jack and Anderson, 2015; Valchovska and Watts, 2016; Richter, 2019), sense of place (Kibler *et al.*, 2015; McKeever, Jack and Anderson, 2015) and available human capital (Bosworth and Turner, 2018; Douglas, Eti-Tofinga and Singh, 2018) influence the development of rural social enterprises. The findings also indicate that institutional connectivity is used to bridge the gap between the core and the periphery (Stathopoulou, Psaltopoulos and Skuras, 2004; Anderson and Lent, 2017; Richter, 2019), by showing that the rural social enterprises actively try to establish institutional relations on different spatial scales to be able to draw resources from those levels to the rural areas in which they operate.

Furthermore, the findings extend our current understanding of the relation between rural social enterprises and the rural context in which they operate by including material elements of place, both in the form of the natural environment (e.g. landscapes and natural resources) and material assets (e.g. the build environment, roads). These elements have been recognized as important for rural (social) entrepreneurship (Bosworth, 2012; Muñoz and Kimmitt, 2019), but are hitherto empirically largely underexplored (see Steinerowski and Steinerowska-Streb, 2012 for an exception). In conceptualizing the organisational context through the human geographic concept of place, these material elements became part of the empirical investigation of this study. The concept of place allows for a broader understanding of the organisational context than conceptualisations commonly utilized in organisational studies (Shrivastava, 1994; Elmes *et al.*, 2012; Guthey, Whiteman and Elmes, 2014; Vlasov, Bonnedahl and Vincze, 2018). There, organisational context is often described as a broad container for all factors external to an organisation but in its operationalisation, priority is given to social, economic, cultural and political

elements, neglecting the natural environment and material elements of the organisational context (Skerratt, 2012; e.g. Lang, Fink and Kibler, 2014). In building on the work of Guthey, Whiteman and Elmes (2014) and Kennedy, Whiteman and Schwedler (2017), this study provides an alternative conceptual lens that allows for a more holistic investigation of the organisational context of a rural social enterprise. One that is not only helpful in understanding the relation between rural social enterprises and the places in which they operate, but that has potential to broaden our understanding of the interaction between organisations and their context more generally.

In answering the second research question it can thus be concluded that the six forms of engagement with place allow rural social enterprises to draw on locational, identity, material, social and institutional elements of place as organisational resources. In this, the findings show that it are not only social or institutional elements of the rural context that the social enterprises engage with, but that the natural and material environment also influence organisational endeavours. Through engagement with the various elements of place, these elements get altered and enhanced, thus showing the potential of rural social enterprise to have a positive contribution to the place(-s) they serve.

6.1.3 Rural social enterprises as hybrid organisations

In combining the findings from the two research questions, and linking hybridity to engagement with place, this study deepens the novel perspective on hybridity in rural social enterprises articulated at the start of this chapter. Steiner and Teasdale (2019) link the diverse resource base of rural social enterprise to their solution-focused attitude towards the communities they serve, meaning that if rural social enterprises discover a need they can potentially address, they will assemble a range of resources needed to do so, irrespective of the economic sector from which these resources derive. This logic resonates with the findings of this study, which show a strong link between the hybrid resource portfolio of rural social enterprises and engagement with elements of place. The empirical material shows that the rural social enterprises depart from needs and opportunities perceived in their locality and hybridize a range of means, originating from within and outside the localities they serve, to address these. In this, they engage with locational, identity, material, social and institutional elements of place. To harness elements of place as organisational resources, different approaches need to be utilized to access and mobilize individual elements of place. For example,

in mobilizing identity aspects of place related to sense of place or in harnessing local social connections, (informal) connections with the local community are key. Yet, in order to translate opportunities into marketable activities, and thus generate a market-income to sustain long-term operations of the organisation, a capability to fulfil market requirements is necessary. In addition to that, the capacity needs to be built to navigate (local) formal institutional frameworks that provide necessary resources, like grant funding and ALMPs, and that set out the rules and regulations rural social enterprises need to abide to. Thus, in order to bring together different elements of place into a productive aggregate that enables rural social enterprises to have a meaningful contribution to the fulfilment of local needs and/or opportunities they need to operate in a hybrid fashion. It can thus be concluded that the ability to hybridize resources originating from different economic sectors is enabling rural social enterprises to engage with the rural context in which they work.

As discussed in chapter 2, the majority of studies conducted on organisational hybridity in social enterprises focus on the perceived tension between social and economic objectives (Smith, Gonin and Besharov, 2013; Mair, Mayer and Lutz, 2015; Quélin, Kivleniece and Lazzarini, 2017). Yet, the data presented here provides evidence that the need to access a diverse set of resources, influenced by an intrinsic link with place, stimulates a hybrid way of working in rural social enterprises. The findings of this study thus shift our understanding of rural social enterprises as hybrid organisations from a focus on combining social and economic objectives, to a focus on hybridizing resources to realize an overarching (social) objective.

Of course, this does not mean that friction between social and economic dynamics does not appear at all in rural social enterprises. In the five capabilities distinguished in this study, there are elements that show that balancing these different aspects is indeed part of managing a hybrid resource portfolio in rural social enterprises. In the findings, this is for example shown through the need for a balanced business case that takes into account both financial and other objectives of the organisation, and the need to accommodate long-term tension, for instance by designing coherent guiding principles that anchor values in organisational processes and structures. However, the findings indicate that overall, rural social enterprises need to combine resources and perspectives originating from institutional, community and market sources. Hence, where previous research on hybridity in social enterprises is focused on the

hybridization of organisational goals (Smith, Gonin and Besharov, 2013; Mair, Mayer and Lutz, 2015; Quélin, Kivleniece and Lazzarini, 2017), the findings of this study indicate that rural social enterprises hybridize resources, thus the means utilized to achieve overall organisational objectives, instead of the organisational objectives themselves. Furthermore, the rural social enterprises are found to strive for integrated value strategies, in which social and economic components strengthen each other, instead of compete with each other, thus strengthening the argument that a hybrid way of working does not derive from competing objectives *per se*, but can also originate from the array of resources utilized to achieve organisational objectives. The findings thus challenge the statement of Castellás, Stubbs and Ambrosini (2019, p. 637) who state that “what hybrids have in common is that they are guided by multiple objectives”, and show that, at least in the rural social enterprises studied, hybridity can also be related to the combination of resources utilized to realise overall organisational objectives. The findings of this study thus provide a novel contribution to the literature on hybrid organisations, in particular to our understanding of organisational hybridity in social enterprises.

In adopting a novel conceptual framework (Resource Orchestration Theory combined with engagement with place) to investigate organisational hybridity, this study thus contributes to a renewed understanding of this concept in rural social enterprises. One in which economic activities are means to a social, societal or environmental end (Kay, Roy and Donaldson, 2016; Roy and Grant, 2020), and in which these economic activities are complemented with activities on an institutional and community level. This distinction between the means and ends of social enterprises provides an opening to address important underlying assumptions about the relation between ‘the social’ and ‘the economic’ within (rural) social enterprise literature (Roy and Grant, 2020). These assumptions shape our understanding of organisational hybridity and of the way in which rural social enterprises operate, but often remain implicit. In conceptualising social and economic objectives as two opposing goals, neo-institutional theory, which is a dominant theoretical perspective in this line of research, seems to perceive ‘the social’ and ‘the economic’ as two separate spheres (Roy and Grant, 2020). As argued by some, separating ‘the social’ and ‘the economic’ in social enterprise might (unconsciously) promote a neoliberal agenda (Nicholls and Teasdale, 2017; Roy and Hackett, 2017), which can lead to the marketization of the non-profit and voluntary

sector (Roy and Grant, 2020) and might reinforce or intensify inequality (Hulgård, 2010; Munoz, 2013). So, a different understanding of the relation between social and economic factors might benefit our understanding of how rural social enterprise (and potentially a wider array of hybrid organisations) function and adjust our expectations of what these organisations can achieve.

A helpful theoretical frame in this light is the work of Karl Polanyi (1944), whose work has already influenced social enterprise scholars over the past decades (Laville and Nyssens, 2001; Defourny and Nyssens, 2006, 2014; Gardin, 2006; Johanisova, Crabtree and Fraňková, 2013; Roy and Hackett, 2017; Roy and Grant, 2020). Polanyi understands the economy from a broad ‘substantive’ perspective, which means it encompasses all interactions of people with both their natural and social environment in order to meet their material needs (Polanyi, 1944; Roy and Grant, 2020). According to this view, those activities that are usually understood under the narrow, mainstream definition of economic, namely monetary exchange on a (competitive) market, only are one aspect of the economic interactions that take place within society. Next to these market-exchange relations, Polanyi distinguishes two other relations related to economic resource allocation: redistributive relations and reciprocity relations (Polanyi, 1944; Dale, 2010). In redistributive relations resources are collected and (re)distributed through a central point or authority, for example a government in a welfare state that redistributes tax income through grants and subsidies. Reciprocity relations refer to relations among individuals or groups based on social bonds and trust. In reciprocity relations, resource allocation can take place through non-monetary exchange, like with volunteer effort or in-kind donations, or through monetary exchange, like monetary donations and sponsorship (Laville and Nyssens, 2001; Dale, 2010).

In a Polanyian conceptualisation, the social and the economic are not two opposing forces, but economic activities are nested in a wider societal framework, making the economy, and the redistributive, reciprocity and market-exchange relations that it comprises, an integral part of society (Polanyi, 1944; Roy and Grant, 2020). The three types of economic relations distinguished by Polanyi largely coincide with the three types of connectivity distinguished in this study: institutional connectivity can be related to the maintenance of redistributive relations, community connectivity provides access to reciprocity relations, and market connectivity refers to the ability

to maintain market-exchange relations. The findings of the current study indicate that rural social enterprises utilize all three types of economic relations distinguished by Polanyi, and his work might thus provide a good starting point for further exploration of the understanding of hybridity originating from different means utilized in a rural social enterprise.

A few scholars have already linked hybridization of these different relations to social enterprises on a theoretical level (Laville and Nyssens, 2001; Defourny and Nyssens, 2006; Roy and Grant, 2020), including for example Defourny and Nyssens (Defourny and Nyssens, 2006, p. 10/11) who state that “by following Polanyi and his ‘substantive approach’ to the economy, we argue that social enterprises combine the economic principles of market, redistribution and reciprocity and hybridize these three types of economic exchange so that they work together rather than in isolation from each other”. Yet, empirical research on this form of hybridization hitherto remains scarce. Where our current understanding of the dynamics of hybridity in social enterprises is mainly based on investigations including two competing logics, the social and the economic, in reality an organisation might have to deal with a wider array of tensions than captured in this duality (Greenwood *et al.*, 2010, 2011; Siegner, Pinkse and Panwar, 2018), a notion that is supported by the findings from this study. The pluralistic view on the economy as proposed by Polanyi provides a broader understanding of the different relations rural social enterprises utilize, including not only market-exchange, but also redistributive and reciprocity relations, that, as shown in the findings presented in this study, are of great importance for the operations of rural social enterprise. It is argued that creating a more in-depth understanding of how hybridization of different organisational resources and relations takes place, for example by empirical investigations based on a Polanyian framework, will not only further increase our understanding of how rural social enterprises operate, but also might improve our understanding of the relation between (broader) social and economic societal forces.

6.1.4 Rural social enterprises as partners in rural development

The research questions posed in this thesis are formulated against the backdrop of the growing interest in rural social enterprise as partners in rural development. It was brought forward in chapter 1 of this thesis that general characteristics of rural social enterprise coincide with contemporary ideas on rural development (Pike, Rodríguez-

Pose and Tomaney, 2007; Baumgartner, Pütz and Seidl, 2013; Steiner, Farmer and Bosworth, 2019). Yet, several scholars conclude that our knowledge of how rural social enterprises operate is limited, and that the expectations of policy makers around rural social enterprises might be unrealistic (Munoz, Steiner and Farmer, 2015; Mazzei and Roy, 2017; Steiner and Teasdale, 2019; Steiner, Farmer and Bosworth, 2019). Hence, our true understanding of the potential of rural social enterprises as partners in rural development is still incomplete. The findings of this study provide two particular insights that can aid our knowledge on the manners in which rural social enterprises can contribute to processes of rural development.

First of all, the findings show that through engagement with place, rural social enterprises not only utilize, but also alter, enrich and enhance elements of place. In drawing on locational, identity, material, social and institutional elements of place, the rural social enterprises make these elements part of their resource portfolio. This resource portfolio does not only include resources embedded in place, but also non-local resources, like national and international government funding or philanthropic funding, or knowhow accessed through national and international partners, consultants and/or other experts. Through deploying elements of place in the overall process of resource orchestration, these elements interact with each other and with the other resources secured by the organisation, and through this interaction get modified. The notion that in the resource orchestration process, local and non-local resources are bundled is in line with previous research that has focused on the role that rural social enterprises play in connecting local and non-local resources and networks (Müller and Korsgaard, 2018; Lang and Fink, 2019; Richter, 2019). It also resonates with contemporary rural development principles that attach importance to utilizing local knowledge and local resources through bottom-up initiatives and connecting them to non-local knowledge and resources (Gkartzios and Lowe, 2019; Bosworth *et al.*, 2020), and thus confirms that the way of working of rural social enterprises is in line with these ideas on rural development (Steiner, Farmer and Bosworth, 2019).

Second of all, the findings indicate that the ability to operate a hybrid resource portfolio is essential in engaging with elements of place. As discussed previously, in order to harness different elements of place as organisational resources, rural social enterprises need to utilize different approaches to access and mobilize these individual elements. The empirical data points to a two-way relation between engagement with

elements of place and the capabilities developed by rural social enterprise to orchestrate their hybrid resource portfolio. For example, in the case of local social connections, it was found that these provide a resource for the organisation, and at the same time are strengthened through their utilization by the organisation. The same goes for a collective sense of place, institutional relations, human capital and material settings of place, which all provide important input for organisational processes, while at the same time, their utilization by the rural social enterprises enhances these elements of place. This two-way relation implies that it is not only the direct outcomes of the services provided by rural social enterprises that might be beneficial for development, but that contributions might also lay in the processes through which these outcomes are realized.

The two-way relation distinguished resonates with current development literature that concludes that the process through which rural development takes shape is a crucial aspect for sustainable solutions (Neumeier, 2017), especially with respect to developing new relations and new ways of cooperation between stakeholders (Richter, 2019; Castro-Arce and Vanclay, 2020; Jungsberg *et al.*, 2020). The findings of this study thus indicate that rural social enterprises can play a part in contributing to such processes of rural development. Another inference that can be drawn from this discussion is that rural social enterprises are one part of a wider constellation of actors in the rural development process (Richter, 2019; Jungsberg *et al.*, 2020). In the findings, this is shown through an emphasis on building relations with institutional and community partners, and through the acknowledgement that support organisations, like sectoral support organisations and local development companies, play an important part in facilitating rural social enterprises with knowledge, expertise, networking opportunities and/or funding. Hence, the findings indicate that to create sustainable development solutions in rural areas, rural social enterprises need to be able to connect to, and cooperate with, institutional partners and other organisations and should thus be perceived as a link in the chain of rural development instead of as a solution in itself (Skerratt, 2012; Mazzei, 2017; Steiner and Teasdale, 2019).

The findings of this study thus concur with previous research that concludes that the way of working of rural social enterprises can prove beneficial for rural development (Steiner, Farmer and Bosworth, 2019; Jungsberg *et al.*, 2020). This study furthermore refines our insights into how the way of operating of rural social enterprise might

benefit development in rural areas, by showing that engagement with different elements of place leads to alterations to and enhancement of these elements. The results of the study point to the importance of a hybrid way of working in this process, which allows rural social enterprises to utilize different approaches to access and bundle resources. The findings suggest that rural social enterprises not only can aid rural development through the direct outcomes realized through the services provided, but also through the processes utilized to alter and enhance elements of place in the resource orchestration process.

6.2 Policy implications

From the results of this study, several implications for policy arise. The findings of this study indicate the importance of the diverse resource base for rural social enterprises, and the value of their hybrid way of working for engagement with place. The data presented in this study evidences the need to combine resources and relations originating from market, institutional and community sources (O'Shaughnessy and O'Hara, 2016b; Steiner and Teasdale, 2019). Each of which brings along different practices and perspectives into the organisation. Hence, this study advocates that on a policy level, acknowledgment is needed of the way in which rural social enterprises hybridize organisational resources, and the complexity that this brings into these organisations. Practically, this holds that support structures should not only focus on technical support to improve commercial capacities of rural social enterprises, but that a wider spectrum of topics needs to be covered in congruence with the types of resources and relations accessed and maintained by rural social enterprises. There is a need to create an understanding of how different activities might be supported in different ways. The importance of elements like volunteer-input and the building of community relations should not be underestimated. However, general acknowledgement of this at a policy level seems scarce (Steiner and Atterton, 2015; Aiken, Taylor and Moran, 2016; Steiner and Teasdale, 2019), which can be illustrated with a practical example from the data of this study. As described in chapter 4, section 4.3.3 (page 143/144), in Scéal, the Local Authority has agreed on funding a fulltime management position for three years for Scéal Development, on the condition that this function will completely focus on developing tourism activities from the Heritage Centre, and will not have responsibilities in light of the local theatre/community hall.

Based on the conclusions drawn in this study, it can be argued that in forcing a divide between the commercial and the community-based operations of Scéal Development, the Local Authority undermines the strength of the organisation in building community engagement to support local developments. Data like this indicates that on an institutional level, there is a need for a deeper understanding of the complex way in which rural social enterprises operate in order to be able to unlock their full potential.

Moreover, as discussed previously in this chapter, it are not only the direct outcomes of the services provided by rural social enterprises that can aid rural development, but the processes through which these outcomes are realised are also of importance. This has consequences for the way in which success of rural social enterprises is evaluated by external parties, like institutional partners and funding agencies. A focus on the (measurable) outcomes realized by rural social enterprises might ignore an important aspect of their potential to realize local rural development, namely the potential to alter and enhance local resources through utilizing them in organisational processes. In confirming the close connection between rural social enterprises and the places they serve, this study furthermore has implications for the way in which scalability and/or replicability of solutions designed by rural social enterprises is perceived (Bloom and Smith, 2010; Blundel and Lyon, 2015).

With policy makers being interested in diffusing best practices between different rural areas, the findings of this study provide insights into some characteristics of rural social enterprises and the way in which they operate that might influence this diffusion. The utilization of elements of place in organisational endeavours provides rural social enterprises with the capability to design and shape activities in accordance with local needs and opportunities, and address multiple elements of place at once, creating location-specific practices and solutions. By drawing strongly on among others local human capital and social connections, a rootedness in place develops which, as Shrivastava and Kennelly (2013, p. 90) state, makes that these organisations “cannot simply fold their tents and go”. Furthermore, the strong motivation to serve a local community might result in limited growth aspirations beyond this community, something which is evident in the data of Scéal Development. Hence, traditional strategies of scaling-up services to different geographic areas might not necessarily provide a suitable growth-strategy (Bauwens, Huybrechts and Dufays, 2020) and

could even deter the positive contributions of rural social enterprises to the areas they serve (Steiner and Teasdale, 2019). Hence, the findings of this study urge policy makers to critically reflect on the necessity and objectives of different forms of organisational growth in relation to rural social enterprises, and instead advocates a focus on investigating how to stimulate conditions that foster the emergence and sustainability of social enterprise in different rural contexts.

Finally, in showing how rural social enterprises utilize various elements of place, this study draws attention to the baseline of resources available in a rural locality that rural social enterprises can build on. It should be acknowledged that these resources are not evenly distributed across regions and localities. Previous research for example highlights that human capital, and the networks and local capacity arising from it, is not evenly distributed among rural regions (Bock, 2016; Lang and Fink, 2019). Hence, policy makers should be aware of how the uneven distribution of such resources, and thus the heterogenic character of rural areas, influences the (potential) uptake of support measures. When, for example, initiatives are stimulated that require a baseline of strong human and social capital, rural localities that lack these resources might (unintentionally) be further marginalized. Hence, an awareness of the (unintended) effects on (in)equality among rural regions/localities is needed in order to design policy initiatives that provide opportunities for rural development for all of those who need it.

6.3 Limitations

The following limitations in relation to this study must be acknowledged. In this study, engagement with place was an analytical point of focus. It has been acknowledged that there is a two-way relation between place and rural social enterprises. External stakeholders of the rural social enterprises have been included in data collection, and analysis of documents relating to developments of the places studied has taken place. Nevertheless, the analysis and results primarily have an organisational level focus, concentrating on the organisational level processes that enable and shape engagement with place. This leaves space to investigate in a more systematic manner how engagement with place is perceived and facilitated from the perspective of those working and living in this place. Investigating the impact of the different forms of

engagement with place on place, and on the lives of those residing in it, would also further strengthen our understanding of this two-way relation.

Moreover, it must be acknowledged that data collection has taken place in a particular national setting, within one geographic area. Hence, the empirical findings might only be applicable to an Irish (rural) context, limiting the empirical generalizability of this study. It should also be acknowledged that the empirical research has taken place in a rural context. Given that some scholars conclude that entrepreneurial processes differ between urban and rural areas (Baumgartner, Pütz and Seidl, 2013), it cannot be assumed that the findings relating to organisational hybridity, and the close relation that was found with engagement with place, relate to social enterprises or other hybrid organisations outside a rural context. However, given that in general social enterprises are linked to operating in resource-constrained environments (Mair and Martí, 2006; Di Domenico, Haugh and Tracey, 2010), the theoretical framework utilized in this study might provide a good starting point to investigate these relations in different geographic settings.

The main limitations of this study thus relate to the empirical generalisability of the findings. However, as discussed in chapter 3, the strength of in-depth case studies lies not in their empirical but in their analytical generalizability. In constructing a novel conceptual framework to investigate hybridity in rural social enterprises, and in showing the value of operationalising the organisational context through the human geographic concept of place, this study has provided new insights that can be utilized in future research in different settings (Maxwell and Chmiel, 2014a). Hence, notwithstanding the limitations, this study has made a useful contribution to literature on rural social enterprises, hybrid organisations and rural development. Furthermore, in developing a novel conceptual framework to investigate rural social enterprises, it provides a useful foundation for future research. The following section will discuss some of these opportunities for future research in more depth.

6.4 Suggestions for future research

The results of this study, and some of the limitations discussed previously, suggest potential avenues for future research. In drawing on Resource Orchestration Theory (ROT), this study has utilized knowledge from the Resource Based View and the Dynamic Capabilities perspective. Both streams of Strategic Management literature

are popular in organisational studies yet remain underexplored in (rural) social enterprises. With the diverse resource base of rural social enterprises being an acknowledged key characteristic of these organisations, and a growing recognition on the importance of capability building for social enterprises (Haugh, 2009; De Silva, Al-Tabbaa and Khan, 2019; Vallaster *et al.*, 2019; Sinthupundaja, Kohda and Chiadamrong, 2020), utilizing knowledge and frameworks from this stream of literature could provide new perspectives on these organisations and the way in which they operate. Strategic Management has evolved from a focus on strategy and resource management in a for-profit setting, to a focus on the processes and strategies used to manage resources in order to fulfil an organisational purpose, be it commercial, social and/or environmental (Meyskens *et al.*, 2010; Bacq and Eddleston, 2018) and thus provides links to investigate hitherto underexplored avenues around resource management in (rural) social enterprises. One of the avenues future research could further explore is ROT, the framework utilized in this thesis. ROT proposes that different ways of orchestrating the resource portfolio are relevant at different stages in the lifecycle of an organisation (Helfat and Peteraf, 2003; Sirmon *et al.*, 2011). The current study has utilized a long-term perspective on organisational development to trace processes of change and stability in two mature rural social enterprises. Future research could investigate the capabilities needed in the early stages of organisational development, which would provide insight into how the emergence and development of rural social enterprises could be supported. Furthermore, future research could further investigate how and under which conditions the capabilities defined in the light of resource orchestration work together and allow for the creation of synergy from a hybrid resource portfolio.

In relation to organisational hybridity in rural social enterprises, this study has proposed a perspective focused on hybridisation of the resources utilized by rural social enterprises. As argued throughout this chapter, future research in this area is key in developing a more in-depth understanding of the way in which rural social enterprises operate. Earlier, the work of Karl Polanyi has already been proposed as a potential pathway to explore this perspective on hybridity. Other potential avenues to deepen our understanding of hybridization of resources could investigate how particular resource strategies, like for example bricolage, are utilized by rural social enterprises in specific situations. Investigating how rural social enterprises foster

collective bricolage, referring to bricolage in a collective organisational process, would provide an interesting research topic in this light (Duymedjian and Rüling, 2010; Barraket *et al.*, 2019). Future research could furthermore focus on the benefits of hybridity in rural social enterprises, and the way in which they are able to create synergy from the different stakeholder perspectives and resources dealt with. As the findings from this study show, hybridity enables rural social enterprises to engage with place. With research on hybridity mainly focusing on competing values and tension, more research on the positive sides of hybridity would balance our understanding of the concept (Anderson and Lent, 2017; Mitra, Byrne and Janssen, 2017).

Moreover, gaps remain in our understanding of how rural social enterprises can aid processes of development in rural areas. This study has shown six different forms of engagement with place. The findings also indicate that through utilizing various elements of place in the resource orchestration process, these elements get altered and enhanced. Future research could further improve our understanding of these processes of enhancement by investigating how and under what conditions this enhancement occurs. As highlighted in section 6.3 of this chapter, that discussed the limitations related to this study, more systematic investigations into the impact of and conditions for engagement with place from the perspective of place and those residing in it is needed to further elaborate our knowledge on the two-way relation between organisations and their context.

Furthermore, research into how engagement with place takes shape in different settings would likely increase our understanding of the factors that influence this engagement. First of all, this could be different national settings. Both case organisations investigated in this study are based in Ireland. It has been acknowledged in previous research that differences on among others a socio-economical, historical and political level trigger different pathways for social enterprise development between countries and regions (Kerlin, 2010; Gordon, 2013; Coskun, Monroe-White and Kerlin, 2019). Hence, it cannot be ruled out that there are national or regional differences in how engagement with place is manifested. Second of all, it has to be acknowledged that the rural is a heterogenous concept, meaning that each rural area has unique characteristics and circumstances. The social enterprises investigated in this study are situated in the same rural region. Investigating how social enterprises engage with different rural settings is likely to increase our understanding of which

elements in the rural context rural social enterprises can utilize to engage with. Special attention should be paid the materiality of the setting, thus including analysis of the influence of the natural environment and the material assets present in different rural settings. Comparative research of engagement with place in different settings, both rural and non-rural, might be beneficial in this respect.

The concept of place also provides opportunity to investigate rural social enterprises in relation to sustainability. The findings of this study confirm previous research in the notion that rural social enterprises are strongly rooted in place (Smith and McColl, 2016; Barraket *et al.*, 2019; Steiner and Teasdale, 2019), and care for the well-being of the communities they serve, both in a social and an ecological manner (Shrivastava and Kennelly, 2013). By being sensitive to the needs of different stakeholders, inclusive and sustainable solutions can be built. Several authors have linked a strong rootedness in place to an ability to create long-term sustainable solutions, in an economic, social and environmental sense (Thomas and Cross, 2007; Shrivastava and Kennelly, 2013; Guthey, Whiteman and Elmes, 2014; Slawinski *et al.*, 2019) and to an increased resilience of a place (Sonnino and Griggs-Trevarthen, 2013; Steiner and Atterton, 2015; Korsgaard, Anderson and Gaddefors, 2016; Vlasov, Bonnedahl and Vincze, 2018). Hence, engagement with place would provide an interesting avenue to further investigate how the operations of rural social enterprises fosters inclusive and sustainable solutions for development, and support what Shrivastava and Kennelly (2013, p. 97) call a “place-based conception of sustainability”, meaning one that is “socially equitable, environmentally sustainable, community compatible, and economically viable” and that might aid rural development efforts.

A final avenue for future research presented here is related to the unintended consequences of the actions of rural social enterprises. The current study has focused on the intended actions of rural social enterprises and has not included the unintended consequences these actions might trigger (Archer, 1995). Previous research has already brought forward some negative, unintended consequences related to (rural) social enterprises, for example related to volunteer fatigue and burn-out (Munoz, Steiner and Farmer, 2015; Kelly *et al.*, 2019) or devolution of power from higher institutional levels (Aiken, Taylor and Moran, 2016). Systematically mapping these unintended consequences would provide an important link in generating realistic

expectations of the potential of rural social enterprises as partners in rural development.

6.5 Conclusion

Against the backdrop of the growing interest in rural social enterprises as partners in rural development, this study set out to deepen our understanding of the way in which rural social enterprises operate within a rural context. Hitherto, empirical research into this has been scarce, leaving gaps in our understanding of how and through which mechanisms rural social enterprises are able to realize meaningful contributions to the places and communities they serve.

With previous research identifying the ability to mobilize resources from a variety of economic sectors as a key characteristic of rural social enterprises, this study took the perspective of rural social enterprises as organisations that manage a hybrid resource base, and hence draws on insights from literature on organisational hybridity. Furthermore, previous research has found that rural social enterprises have a strong link with the rural places they serve and are motivated to better the life of local community members. However, insight into exactly how rural social enterprises engage with place remains scarce and is mainly focused on social and institutional processes, neglecting material aspects of the rural context. Taking into consideration the above, two research questions have been central to this study. The first question is focused on investigating what capabilities rural social enterprises develop in order to manage their hybrid resource base. The second research question is focused on how rural social enterprises engage with the rural context in which they operate.

A conceptual framework has been constructed that utilizes insights from Resource Orchestration Theory (ROT) and the human geographic concept of place. ROT facilitates a focus on the organisational processes and routines, also known as capabilities, that enable mobilization, bundling and leveraging of resources. The concept of place has been utilized to operationalise the rural context in which rural social enterprises operate. In distinguishing three dimensions of place (location, sense of place, and locale), the concept helps to structure the multi-dimensional concept of ‘the rural’, and include geographic, identity, institutional, material and social aspects in the data analysis. In combining the two theoretical perspectives, a conceptual framework emerged in which place is understood as a unique configuration of

(potential) resources that rural social enterprises engage which as part of their hybrid resource portfolio. The empirical research took the form of an explorative qualitative case analysis of two rural social enterprises. In combining archival document analysis with semi-structured interviews and participant observations, processes of stability and change could be traced to help distinguish the capabilities built by rural social enterprises over the lifetime of their organisation.

The findings outline five capabilities that support the orchestration of a hybrid resource portfolio that the rural social enterprises have developed, namely institutional connectivity, community connectivity, market connectivity, managing paradoxes and organisational adaptability, and describe the micro-foundations that underlie each of these capabilities. Furthermore, the findings outline six forms of engagement with place, namely harnessing locational aspects for marketable activities; fostering a collective sense of place; (re)invigorating social connections; enhancing institutional relations; building on local human capital; and improving local material settings. These six forms of engagement allow for the rural social enterprises to draw on locational, identity, material, social and institutional elements of place as organisational resources. By making these elements of place part of the organisational resource orchestration process, these elements get altered and enhanced, thus indicating that rural social enterprises are able to change elements of their rural context. The findings evidence that rural social enterprises do not only utilize economic means to fulfil their organisational objectives but show the importance of integrating these with resources deriving from institutional and community sources. The five capabilities distinguished operate in interaction with each other. Where institutional, community and market connectivity are of importance to gain access to resources linked to different stakeholders, the capabilities of managing paradoxes and organisational adaptability are needed to integrate and leverage these resources in a meaningful way, and hence allow for the productive hybridization of the resources mobilized. Furthermore, these capabilities support engagement with place, because they provide the rural social enterprises with different approaches to access and mobilize elements of place as organisational resources. It is thus concluded that there is a mutually reinforcing link between the ability to manage a hybrid resource portfolio and engagement with place. Additionally, it is concluded that productively hybridizing

different means represents a mechanism that supports the ability of rural social enterprises to function in a rural context.

Through the findings, a new perspective on hybridity in rural social enterprises is revealed. Instead of focussing on the fulfilment of opposing organisational objectives as the main source of hybridity, the findings presented here point to the diverse range of resources originating from different economic sectors that instigates a hybrid way of working in rural social enterprises. In this, this study signals a need to explicate underlying assumptions about the relation between ‘the social’ and ‘the economic’ and suggests potential avenues for research based on integration of these components instead of opposition. From a policy perspective, the findings of this study indicate that rural social enterprises operate in line with contemporary rural development principles. Where the empirical evidence demonstrates that the rural social enterprises studied show perseverance and creativity in circumventing challenges related to place, the findings also indicate that structural supports might be needed to help rural social enterprises deal with the disadvantages created by structural factors, like locational elements of place, that cannot be circumvented or changed by organisational endeavours. Furthermore, in designing support structures for rural social enterprises, institutional partners need to recognize the essential function of hybridizing different means in order to engage with and alter elements of place. Acknowledgment and a better understanding of the complex character of rural social enterprises is needed to realize their potential as a link in the chain of rural development.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1: A note on the place of ‘place’ in the ontological and epistemological debate

In chapter 3, section 3.1.2, it is argued that place can be understood as a structure in which agents operate. From a geographer’s perspective Agnew (2003, p. 216) states that “places are [...] made by the people who inhabit them at the same time that the places help to make them.” In this, there is overlap with the way in which the morphogenetic/morphostatic approach (hereafter M/M approach) described in chapter 3, section 3.1.2, approaches the relationship between agency and structure, and the way in which Agnew understands the relationship between place and the people and organisations residing in it. Yet, on an ontological level, there appears to be a division between the social world and the material/natural world (Carolan, 2005; Elder-Vass, 2017). As explained by Elder-Vass (2017, p. 1448): “The prevailing concepts of social structure in the social sciences, though diverse, have uniformly ignored the contributions of material objects, but this radically misrepresents the ontology of the social world.” This does not only happen in (critical) realism, but is a general ontological challenge observed across different philosophies of science (Dunlap and Catton, 1983; Lidskog, 1998). According to Dunlap and Catton (1983), the neglect of the natural and built environment in sociology’s ontology and epistemology can be related back to our Western culture, in which we have a limited relationship with the natural world around us. However, the role of the physical environment on social phenomena is becoming a topic of interest in the ontological and epistemological debate. Two fields in which this focus on the interaction between nature and society are coming more to the foreground are the field of socio-technological interaction (e.g. Elder-Vass, 2017) and the field of environmental sociology (e.g. Dunlap and Catton, 1983; Lidskog, 1998; Carolan, 2005). In both these fields, (critical) realism is used to provide insights into how nature/material objects and society are integrated, yet both with their own emergent powers.

As explained in chapter 3, ontological realism accepts that there is an independent world outside of our perception of this world. Even though this independent world is often interpreted as a purely social world in further theorization, for example in Baskhar’s seminal Transformational Model of Social Activity (TSMA) and Archer’s M/M approach, this does not mean that realism limits this world to this social

understanding (Lidskog, 1998; Elder-Vass, 2017). In the second edition of the book 'The Possibility of Naturalism', Bhaskar (Bhaskar, 1989, pp. 173–4) states the following:

“Now were I to rewrite PON [The Possibility of Naturalism] today I would stress the way in which social order is embedded and conditioned by the natural order from which it is emergent and on which it in turn acts back. An ecological interpretation of social life is as important as is recognition of our biological being - both are insufficiently elaborated in this book.” (Bhaskar, 1989, pp. 173–4; cited in Lidskog, 1998, p. 20).

It has to be acknowledged that there is no societal without a natural setting, just as there is no natural setting without our socially mediated view on it (Carolan, 2005). Just as the social structures in which agents operate, the natural context, in this study represented by the physical components of the concept of place, provides a certain distribution of resources (e.g. natural resources or the built environment) which are of influence on, and likely to be influenced by, the actions undertaken by agents. On an ontological level, nature thus provides us with enabling and constraining factors, whether we are aware of them or not. From an epistemological point of view, we can only understand these factors through our perception of them (Lidskog, 1998). Hence, the understanding of structure as the material elements of social life, which are traditionally perceived as social structures embedded in, among others, institutions and roles, is extended in this study to include elements from the natural and built environment as well. In the conceptual framework, this is represented by the inclusion of locational elements (e.g. physical features of the rural landscape) in the understanding of place, and by including material elements (e.g. the built environment) in the understanding of the locale of a place.

Appendix 2: Ideal type definition of social enterprise

Based on the work of Defourny (2001) and Hulgård (2011), Defourny and Nyssens (2014) have articulated an ideal type definition of a social enterprise. Their definition is based on the conceptualization of social enterprises of the EMES-network and is anchored in the vision of the social economy as held by European scholars (Galera and Borzaga, 2009; Defourny and Nyssens, 2014). The framework should not be used as a precise set of conditions an organisation should meet, but is “somewhat analogous to a compass” (Defourny and Nyssens, 2014, p. 45). The framework incorporates three dimensions: the *economic and entrepreneurial dimension*, the *social dimension* and the *participatory governance dimension*. Each dimension has a subset of indicators, which results in a total of 9 indicators.

Under the *economic and entrepreneurial dimension*, the following is distinguished:

- (1) a *continuous activity producing goods and/or selling services*; i.e., there is a direct productive activity at the core of the organisation;
- (2) a *significant level of economic risk*; i.e. the financial viability and securing of resources is dependent upon the effort of organisational members;
- (3) a *minimum amount of paid work*; i.e. there is some level of paid employment, although this can be combined with voluntary activities.

The *social dimension* is made up out of:

- (4) an *explicit aim to benefit the community*; i.e. it is a core aim to serve the community or a specific sub-group of the community;
- (5) an initiative *launched by a group of citizens* or civil society organisations; i.e. collective dynamics have given rise to enterprise and are maintained over time.
- (6) a *limited profit distribution*; i.e. there is non-distribution or limited profit distribution present, in order to avoid profit-maximizing behaviour.

The *participatory governance dimension* is made up out of:

- (7) a *high degree of autonomy*; i.e. the organisation is governed independent from public authorities or other (private) organisations
- (8) a *decision-making power not based on capital ownership*; i.e. based on for example an ‘one member, one vote’ system.

(9) a *participatory nature*, which involves various parties affected by the activity; i.e. users/customers and other stakeholders are involved in decision-making and governing processes.

Appendix 3: Interview guide

To guide the main themes of discussion during the interviews conducted as part of this study, an interview guide was used. Due to the semi-structured nature of the interviews, each interview followed its own course, depending on the (organisational) experience of the interviewee and the role/type of engagement with the organisation of this person. Hence, an individual interview guide was created for each interview participant prior to the interview. Table 12 provides an outline of the main themes discussed during the interviews and provides examples of the questions posed to the interviewees.

Topic	Example of questions
Introduction of researcher and research topic	-Introduction of researcher and of topic under investigation -Informed consent / ask for permission to audio record
Introduction interviewee	-How did you become involved in the organisation? -Can you explain your current affiliation / role and responsibilities? -How are you related to the area in which the organisation is operating? (e.g. grew up here / living here / working here).
Characterizing the organisation	-How would you describe the organisation? -What are the main organisational activities? How are these resourced? -How is the organisation linked/connected to the place in which it operates?
Strategy and influence of internal/external developments	-How has the organisation changed over the years? (What was the organisation like when you joined?) -What has caused this change? -How do you / have you been able to deal with these changes? (e.g. What needed to change in the organisation and how did you realize this change?) -Where do you want the organisation to stand in 5 years' time? What is needed to get there?
Key organisational events	-Over the lifetime of the organisation, what do you perceive to be the most important events in light of the development of the organisation? (What are the turning points / key events that make the organisation what it is today?)
Wrap up	-Advice on other people to talk to? -Advice on documents to look at? -Thank interviewee for time and information. -Explain how findings from study will be utilized.

Table 12: Interview guide

Appendix 4: Participant information sheet



Participant Information Sheet

Purpose of the Study

As part of the requirements for a PhD degree at UCC, I have to carry out a research study. This study is concerned with what it is social enterprises that have originated in rural areas do, and why and how they do this.

This study is one in ten studies carried out by the European research consortium RurAction. On the pages that follow, information will be provided about this research consortium, and the way in which we conduct research. But first, I will provide you with information specific to this study.

What does your participation in this specific study involve?

You have been asked to participate in an interview. This is a face-to-face interview conducted by Mara van Twuijver. The interview will last approximately 1 hour. I will use a digital recorder to record the conversation if you are comfortable with this approach. If you disagree with recording the conversation, I will take handwritten notes. You do not have to answer any questions that you would prefer not to. You are not obliged for giving me a reason why you don't want to answer certain questions.

Who has reviewed this specific study?

The Social Research Ethics Committee of UCC has approved of this specific study.

The rest of this information sheet contains important information about the research consortium and the way in which research is conducted, what will happen with the information you provide, what will happen with the results of the study and how you can withdraw from the study if you want to. The procedures outlined there, will also apply to this study.

Contact details

If you have any questions, comments or complaints regarding this study you can contact me, Mara van Twuijver (mvantwuijver@ballyhoura.org) or my supervisor Dr. Mary O'Shaughnessy (mary.oshaughnessy@ucc.ie). You can also get in touch with the consortium coordinator, Prof. Dr. Gabriela Christmann (gabriela.christmann@leibniz-irs.de).



Social Entrepreneurship in Structurally Weak Rural Regions: Analysing Innovative Troubleshooters in Action

Participant Information Sheet

About this research project

RurAction is a European research project that investigates how social enterprises facilitate social innovations in rural regions. It acknowledges social enterprises as promising but often neglected actors that are perceived as troubleshooters of social problems who are able to stabilise and improve the living conditions in these regions.

RurAction aims at achieving excellent results and qualifying early stage researchers as equally scientifically and practically skilled experts for social entrepreneurship and social innovations in rural regions. The project lasts from December 2016 until November 2020.

The Early Stage Researcher

Name: Mara van Twuijver
Hosting institution: Ballyhoura Development CLG
E-mail: mvantwuijver@ballyhoura.org

How will the research be conducted?

The research will be conducted in the following rural regions: Mid-West/Ireland, Sjælland/Denmark, Uckermark/Germany, Pilski/Poland, Mühlviertel/Austria, Phtiotis/Greece and Baixo Alentejo/Portugal. Field research involves the following methods:

Quantitative research methods:

- a standardised online survey of social entrepreneurs, regional economic experts, regional politicians and experts of social welfare

Qualitative research methods:

- Participant observations
- Semi-structured interviews with social entrepreneurs, local residents, regional decision makers, customers of regional services and network partners of the social entrepreneurs
- Network analysis

Who is organising the research?

The research programme will be implemented by ten research institutions and five social enterprises:

- Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space (IRS, Erkner/Germany), Prof. Christmann
- Adam Mickiewicz University (AMU, Poznan/Poland), Prof. Strykiewicz and Dr. Rogowski
- Roskilde University (RUC, Roskilde/Denmark), Prof. Hulgård
- University College Cork (UCC, Cork/Ireland), Dr. O'Shaughnessy
- Ballyhoura Development (Kilfinane/Ireland), Pádraig Casey
- Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography (IfL, Leipzig /Germany), Dr. Lang



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- University of The Aegean (UAE, Mytilini/Greece), Prof. Tsobanoglou
- Otelo eGen (Vorchdorf/Austria), Martin Hollinetz and Wolfgang Mader
- University Institute of Lisbon (ISTE-IUL, Lisbon/Portugal), Prof. Ferreiro, Prof. Henriques, Prof. de Sousa
- University of Potsdam (Potsdam/Germany), Dr. Weinbach
- ADCMoura (Moura/Portugal), Clara Lourenço
- Stevia Hellas (Lamia/Greece), Christos Stamatis
- Social Impact (Potsdam/Germany), Norbert Kunz
- Technical University of Berlin (Berlin/Germany), Prof. Christmann
- University of Leipzig (Leipzig/Germany), Prof. Lentz

Why have I been invited to take part?

We are inviting you to take part because of your contact or relation to one of the involved social enterprises or because of your residence or position in one of the investigated regions. Talking to people with contact to a social enterprise will help us to understand the activities of this enterprise. Talking to residents will help us to understand the situation of the observed region and the impact the social enterprise has.

What will happen if I agree to take part?

We will arrange a meeting to conduct a loosely structured interview. Thereby, we will use a digital recorder to record the conversation if you are comfortable with this approach. If you disagree with recording the conversation, we will take handwritten notes. You do not have to answer any questions that you would prefer not to.

In some of the researched regions, videos and pictures will be taken by professional filmmakers and researchers. This may include also your image. Images and video sequences of you only will be released if you give your consent.

Can I refuse to take part?

Yes. You do not have to take part and you do not have to give any reason for refusing. Even if your employer has given general permission for the research to be carried out in your organisation, there is no obligation for you to participate.

What will happen to the information I provide? How will confidentiality be safeguarded?

Recorded interviews will be transcribed; handwritten interview notes will be typed up by the interviewer. In both cases, your transcript will be anonymised by removing your name and any information that might allow identifying you such as your job title, location information (name of municipalities, cities and towns), names of institutions and time specifications. All personal data are strictly kept separate from the transcripts. The voice recordings will be deleted at latest at the end of



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the project while the interview transcriptions will be stored securely on a password-protected hard drive belonging to the Deutsches Forschungsnetzwerk (German Research Network). If demanded, you will have the opportunity to review the transcript of your interview and remove data from it, to ensure that no unnecessary risks are being taken.

The procedure of anonymizing interviews as described above, may be contradictory to your intention to popularise your insights or to promote your case study as best practice. In this case, you have the opportunity to declare in the consent form that you agree with processing and publishing your interview data in a non-anonymised form. However, if you feel that there is any risk or potential for harm, you can withdraw from your consent and demand that your interview data will be anonymised. *Please understand that withdrawal from the project has to be declared four months after data collection at latest due to planned publications.*

What will happen to the results of the study?

The results of the study will be disseminated in different ways:

- Findings will form the basis for the doctoral dissertation of the early-stage-researcher as well as further publications in academic journals. Moreover, the research findings will be presented at both national and international conferences
- Results will be communicated to the public by press releases, which may result in newspaper articles and in articles of public or special interest magazines.
- Results will be presented to politicians in the field of rural development and social business at the European level during a policy round table; they will be the cornerstones of a policy brief.
- Findings will contribute to a practice handbook that addresses social enterprises operating in rural regions.
- Pictures and videos will be published in the project's social media profiles (like Facebook, Twitter or Instagram) during the implementation of the research. We will not publish any pictures of your person without your signed consent.
- A documentary film will be produced about challenges and opportunities of structurally weak rural regions and how social enterprises respond to them and will be addressed to rural residents.
- An exhibition will show how bottom-up initiatives seek to initiate social changes in the respective regions. The exhibition will be used for presenting the project at science nights and as a travelling exhibition in the investigated regions.

Contact for further information:

If you would like any further details, please have a look on www.ruraction.eu or contact the project manager Mrs. Marie-Julie Jacquemot (marie-julie.jacquemot@leibniz-irs.de), the ethic commissioner Łukasz Rogowski (lukasz.rogowski@amu.edu.pl) or the participating researcher.



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If I agree to take part in the study now, can I withdraw later?

Yes. You can withdraw at any time, and you do not have to give any reason. To do so, please email the project coordinator, Prof. Dr. Gabriela Christmann (gabriela.christmann@leibniz-irs.de) and Mara van Twuijver (mvantwuijver@ballyhoura.org). *If you would like us to remove the anonymised information you have already provided, please note that this is only possible four months after data collection at latest.* Afterwards the results will be published and it will no longer be possible to remove your contribution.

Are there any benefits or disadvantages to taking part?

There are no disadvantages we are aware of. Your agreement to participate does not affect any of your legal rights. There may be no direct personal benefits from participation. However, the project will provide information about the impacts of social enterprises in rural regions which you might find valuable.

Contact details for complaints

If you should have any complaints about this project, please contact the project coordinator Prof. Dr. Gabriela Christmann (gabriela.christmann@leibniz-irs.de).

Postal address: Prof. Dr Gabriela Christmann, Leibniz-Institute for Research on Society and Space, Flakenstrasse 29-31, 15537 Erkner/Germany.

You will be given a copy of this to keep together with a copy of your consent form



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Appendix 5: Participant consent form interviews



Social Entrepreneurship in Structurally Weak Rural Regions: Analysing Innovative Troubleshooters in Action

Participant Consent Form A

Main investigator and contact details Prof. Dr. Gabriela Christmann
Leibniz Institute for Research on
Society and Space
Flakenstrasse 29-31
15537 Erkner/Germany
gabriela.christmann@leibniz-irs.de

Name and host institution of the Early Stage Researcher:
Mara van Twuijver (mara.van.twuijver@uamail.ucc.ie), Ballyhoura Development CLG

1. I agree to take part in the RurAction research project. I have read the Participant Information Sheet for the study. I understand what my role will be in this research, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
2. I give permission for my interview with Mara van Twuijver to be audio-recorded.
3. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time, without giving a reason.
4. I am free to ask any questions at any time.
5. I understand what will happen to the data collected from me for the research.
6. I have been provided with a copy of this Participant Consent Form and the Participant Information Sheet.
7. I understand that quotes from the interview may be used in the dissemination of the results.

Processing and publishing my interview data in

☐

an anonymised form

Any information which might help to identify the respondent will be removed from the transcript. Data that will be removed are your name, your job title, location information (name of municipalities, cities and towns), names of institutions and time specifications.

☐

a non-anonymised form

Hereby I agree that my interview data will be processed and published in a non-anonymised form. I know that I have the opportunity to withdraw from this agreement and to demand that my interview data will be anonymised. I understand that this is only possible before publication.



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Social Entrepreneurship in Structurally Weak Rural Regions: Analysing Innovative Troubleshooters in Action

Name of participant (print)

Date and Signature

Participants will be given a copy of this form to keep.

I wish to withdraw from this study

If you wish to withdraw from the research, please contact the project coordinator Prof. Dr. Gabriela Christmann (gabriela.christmann@leibniz-irs.de) and the early stage researcher referring to the project title RurAction. You do not have to give a reason for why you would like to withdraw.



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Social Entrepreneurship in Structurally Weak Rural Regions: Analysing Innovative Troubleshooters in Action

Participant Consent Form B

Main investigator and contact details Prof Dr. Gabriela Christmann
Leibniz Institute for Research on Society
and Space (IRS)
Flakenstrasse 29-31
15537 Erkner/Germany
gabriela.christmann@leibniz-irs.de

Name and host institution of the Early Stage Researcher:

Mara van Twuijver (mara.van.twuijver@umail.ucc.ie), Ballyhoura Development CLG

Your interview data (original text and its changes) will be archived in a chosen social science repository in order to be used for research purposes. The full anonymity will be checked and, if necessary, further measures of anonymity will be taken. The voice recordings of your interviews will be deleted after completion of these anonymity measures.

I agree ☐yes ☐no

Your contact information will be transferred to the chosen social science repository in order to give other interested researchers the possibility to contact you at a later time.

Your contact information will not be linked with your interview data and will be saved so that no third person can access them. We will store the data in the repository for at least ten years in order to allow follow-up research.

The transfer of your contact details to other interested researchers will only be approved for non-commercial research purposes in similar research fields.

I agree ☐yes ☐no

Name of participant (print)

Date and Signature

Participants will be given a copy of this form to keep.



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Appendix 6: Participant consent form observations



Social Entrepreneurship in Structurally Weak Rural Regions: Analysing Innovative Troubleshooters in Action

Participant Consent Form

Researcher and contact details

Mara van Twuijver
Email: mara.van.twuijver@umail.ucc.ie
Phone number: 00353(0)879481452

1. I agree to take part in the RurAction research project. I have read the Participant Information Sheet for the study. I understand what my role will be in this research, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
2. I understand that Mara van Twuijver will take part in the current and following meetings and activities in her role as researcher.
3. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time, without giving a reason.
4. I am free to ask any questions at any time.
5. I understand what will happen to the data collected from me for the research.
6. I have been provided with a copy of this Participant Consent Form and the Participant Information Sheet.
7. I understand that anonymized extracts from the meetings may be quoted in the thesis and any subsequent publications if I give permission below.

Please tick one box

☐

I agree that anonymized extracts from the meetings may be quoted in the thesis and any subsequent publications

☐

I do not agree that anonymized extracts from the meetings may be quoted in the thesis and subsequent publications

Name of Participant (print):

Date:

Signature:

Participants will be given a copy of this form to keep.

I wish to withdraw from this study

If you wish to withdraw from the research, please contact the project coordinator, Prof. Dr. Gabriela Christmann (gabriela.christmann@leibniz-irs.de), and the researcher, Mara van Twuijver (mara.van.twuijver@umail.ucc.ie), referring to the project title RurAction. You do not have to give a reason for why you would like to withdraw.



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Appendix 7: From open coding to results

The analytical process started with open coding of the collected data. The goal of the process of open coding was to increase the familiarity of the researcher with her data, and to order the data for further analysis. The open codes were descriptive in nature and focused on grouping information from different data sources on the organisational activities, organisational structures/roles, type of (interaction with/between) stakeholders, types of interaction with elements of place and types of resources utilized (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Paavilainen-Mäntymäki and Welch, 2013; Maxwell and Chmiel, 2014b).

The open coding resulted in a list of 261 codes for Scéal Development, and 298 for Cúram. These codes were then ordered in 29 main themes for Scéal Development, and 32 main themes for Cúram (see table 13). Each of these themes contained multiple subthemes (in some cases up to 15 subthemes). For example, the theme of ‘careful development’ distinguished in the data of Scéal Development contained the sub-themes ‘Conservation environment and heritage’ and ‘Mindful of community’. These (sub-)themes, combined with the visual data displays of chronological organisational events that were produced outside of NVivo⁶², were utilized to write a thick description in Word for each case organisation (around 50 pages each). In these thick descriptions the core chronology of the organisations was established, key organisational events were described, as well as significant changes in the resource portfolio. These thick descriptions provided a starting point for further analysis of key organisational themes and events.

To move from the open, descriptive codes, to more analytical codes that could provide an answer to the research questions central to this study, the researcher utilized memos to combine theoretical insights with empirical evidence (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Easton, 2010; Elliott, 2018). An example of this is the way in which the empirical material grouped under the code ‘internal tension’ helped the researcher to move from the empirical evidence to a description of the capability of managing paradoxes. During the process of open coding, the code of ‘internal tension’ was used to group data that related to different expressions of tension and/or opposing views in the organisation. This data was then compared with different theoretical concepts, to create a deeper understanding of the relation between the individual pieces of data. In table 14 an excerpt can be found of the memo written on the analysis of this code. It provides an insight into how empirical evidence is linked to different theoretical perspectives. In following this process, the researcher was able to re-code the data under ‘internal tension’ into among others a code ‘long-term tension’, describing the persistent nature of certain contradictions within the organisation, and a code ‘aligning key stakeholders’, describing the ways in which organisational members tried to reconcile long-term tensions. Hence, in comparing the empirical evidence with theoretical perspectives, the researcher was able to create a new, and deeper, understanding of her data. In this specific example, this contributed to the description of the capability of ‘managing paradoxes’, which is built out of the micro-foundations ‘aligning stakeholders’ and ‘accommodating long term tensions’. In following this

⁶² NVivo 12 has limited possibilities for organising data in a chronological fashion. Hence, visual data displays were either drawn by hand or compiled in Microsoft Word/PowerPoint/Lucid and added in NVivo as images to link to further analysis.

process of analytical coding for all the themes distinguished through the process of open coding, the data was recoded into the 12 micro-foundations that add up to 5 dynamic capabilities, and the 6 forms of engagement with place that are described in the findings of this study.

Cúram	Scéal Development
Awareness of organisation (external perception)	Added value for community
Business model	Business Model
Clients	Careful development
Community engagement	Commercial challenge
Cooperation other organisations	Community involvement
Ethos	Constraints in development
External challenges	External stakeholders
External stakeholders	External tension
Financial resources (types/source)	Financial resources (types/source)
Future	Future
Geographic location	Geographic location
Governance	Governance
HSE Tender	Historical significance
Internal challenges	Informal networks
Leadership	Internal tension
Learning from others	Local leadership
Mission	Mission
Needs of community	Natural significance
Organisational activities	Organisational activities
Organisational development	Organisational development
Organisational identity	Ownership of land
Organisational structure	Paid staff
Paid employees	Rules and regulations location
Policy (influence on organisation)	Sense of place
Reputation / quality	Strategy development
Sector (homecare)	Success
Sense of connection	Succession
Social developments Alzheimer	Tourism industry
Social structure locale / isolation	Volunteering
Strategy	
Success	
Volunteers	

Table 13: Main themes resulting from open coding

16 07 2020

“In analysing the internal and external tensions present in case 2, it seems that Scéal Development is constantly looking for that Goldilocks-sweet spot. Development cannot be too small, then the organisation won't sustain itself. Yet, it can also not be too big, because then it might negatively impact the community. In navigating this balance, it seems to be a constant search for the Goldilocks-effect: the just right-fit.”

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“In further analysing the data on tensions/the Goldilocks effect, it seems that there never is that sweet spot in which development is just right; due to the different perspectives of different organisational members (and external people) it seems more a ‘polder-model’ in which it is a constant negotiation. E.g. Isaac (secretary board): “We definitely had a bit of conflict this year and a committee member that left the committee. I think she felt that we were going down an area she wasn’t interested in.” Overall, a balance has to be found that is satisfying /acceptable for most people, a compromise between the different perspectives. [...] This seems to be in line with Archer (1995) who states that society is always a compromise and never exactly as one person/group wants it. [...] To do: revisit literature on paradoxes to see what point of view this offers on how to deal with long term frictions: start with Jay, 2013; Smith and Lewis, 2011; Slawinski *et al.*, 2019.

Table 14: Excerpt from analytical memo on paradoxes

Appendix 8: RurAction deliverables and other academic work completed

This appendix provides an overview of the deliverables and academic work that has been completed over the course of this PhD-trajectory, including peer-reviewed publications and academic presentations at conferences. The research conducted in this thesis is part of an EU Horizon 2020 Marie Skłodowska-Curie Innovative Training Network (ITN), called RurAction (grant agreement number 721999). This ITN is focussed on social entrepreneurship in structurally weak rural regions. As part of the project, a total of 10 PhD students are hosted across 8 academic institutions and 2 social enterprises throughout Europe. Furthermore, 1 university and 3 social enterprises are included as beneficiaries in the project, providing training to the PhD-researchers. As part of this project, placements, secondments, training schools and other deliverables have been completed by the researcher, which are listed below.

Being part of the ITN provided the benefit of an academic community at hand with similar research interest and topics. The peer-group of PhD-students with which ideas and knowledge could be shared in training sessions (3 to 5 day training school, twice a year for 3 years) and secondments (3 in total, each of a 3 to 5 week period), and through shared deliverables (e.g. mutual presentations and a handbook chapter) and shared conference visits were beneficial to increase understanding of the academic field. Furthermore, the consortium included experienced professors and senior lecturers, whose feedback on this specific research project was gathered during the training sessions and consortium meetings. Below, a list of peer-reviewed publications, academic presentations, courses and training schools, placements and secondments, and other deliverables has been provided.

Peer-reviewed publications

Olmedo, L. van Twuijver, M., O'Shaughnessy, M. (2019). *Community-Based Social Enterprises fostering Inclusive Development in Peripheral European Rural Areas*. Social and Solidarity Economy Knowledge Hub for the SDGs (unsse.org) – United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy (UNTFSSSE). <https://unsse.org/knowledge-hub/community-based-social-enterprises-fostering-inclusive-development-in-peripheral-european-rural-areas/>

van Twuijver, M., Olmedo, L., O'Shaughnessy, M., Hennessy, T. (2020). *Rural Social Enterprises in Europe: a Systematic Literature Review*, Local Economy, 2020, Vol. 35(2) 121–142, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0269094220907024>.

Academic presentations

2018

van Twuijver, M., Olmedo, L. and O'Shaughnessy, M. (2018) *Empirical evidence from Rural Social Enterprises in a European Context. A Systematic Literature Review*. 50th Conference of Irish Geographers, 12th May, Maynooth (Ireland).

van Twuijver, M. (2018) *The role of social entrepreneurs in place-based development*. CUBS Postgraduate symposium, May 2018, Cork, Ireland.

van Twuijver, M. (2018) *Community-based social entrepreneurship in rural areas*. CUBS Annual Review Department of Food, Business and Development, December 11th, 2018

2019

Olmedo, L., van Twuijver, M. and Smyth, C. (2019) *Community Based Social Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Development*. CUBS Entrepreneurship Speaker Series, 6th March, Cork (Ireland) (see, <https://www.cubsucc.com/events/community-based-social-enterprise---entrepreneurship/>)

Olmedo, L., van Twuijver, M., and O'Shaughnessy, M. (2019) *Empirical evidence from rural social enterprises in a European context – A systematic literature review and case study*. Cork University Business School Postgraduate Research Symposium, 13th May, Cork (Ireland). - *Awarded Best Research Paper*

van Twuijver, M. and O'Shaughnessy, M. (2019) *Exploring a realist approach to the practised strategies of rural social enterprises*. 7th International EMES conference, 24-7th June, Sheffield (UK).

van Twuijver, M. and O'Shaughnessy, M. (2019) *The practised strategies of rural community-based social enterprises*. International Social Innovation Research Conference (ISIRC), 2-4 September, Glasgow (UK)

van Twuijver, M. (2018) *The practised strategies of rural community-based social enterprises*. CUBS Annual Review Department of Food, Business and Development, December 11th, 2018

2020

Olmedo, L, van Twuijver, M., & O'Shaughnessy, M., *Rurality as context for innovative responses to social challenges – the role of rural social enterprises*, CUBS Post-Graduate Symposium 2020, Online Webinar, 30th July 2020 (webinar)

van Twuijver, M. and O'Shaughnessy, M., *A spatial view on hybridity in rural based social enterprises*, International Social Innovation Research Conference (ISIRC), 1st – 3rd September 2020, Sheffield (webinar)

Courses and training schools

Training (RurAction)

- RurAction conference “Challenges and Opportunities of Structurally Weak Rural Regions in Europe. Social Innovations and Social Enterprises Acting Under Adverse Conditions”, 4- 6 December 2017, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland.
- Rur-Inno Symposium "Intermediaries in the countryside – social enterprises as drivers of social innovation in rural Europe” - December 7 and 8, 2017, Adam Mickiewicz University Poznan, Poland.
- RurAction Spring school (Social Entrepreneur Research, theories, methods), IfL, Germany, May 2018.
- RurAction Autumn Skills Seminar (Dissemination, theories, methods) OTELO, Austria, November 2018.
- RurAction Spring school (Social Innovations, theories), RUC, Denmark, March 2019.
- RurAction Autumn Skills Seminar (Social Enterprise Management) BD/UCC, Ireland, November 2019.
- RurAction Final Conference, IRS, Germany (webinar), September 2020.

Training courses (outside RurAction)

- UCC FE6012 Social entrepreneurship (Academic year 2018 / 2019) – 5 ECTS
- UCC PG7038 – Almost Phinished (Academic year 2019 / 2020) – 5 ECTS
- Nvivo training (provided by QDATraining; Academic year 2018 / 2019) – 2 day course comprised of Introduction to NVivo 12 and Nvivo Underway.

Placement and Secondments

Placement:

Ballyhoura Development CLG, (Kilfinane, Ireland) (Oct. 2018 – March 2021)
Ballyhoura Development is a community-led local development company operating as a company limited by guarantee (CLG) and a registered charity. The organisation provides a wide range of services to communities, families, individuals and businesses in their region, all aimed at community, economic and environmental development of the region. As part of the RurAction project, the researcher was officially hosted by this organisation for the duration of her research project. Next to conducting her

research, the researcher participated in training, community planning workshops, district fora, projects, and day-to-day organisational activities in the organisation. She also represented Ballyhoura Development on several symposia, conferences and networking events. Activities included among others:

- Project leader Social Impact Pilot: Workshop series with 2 organisations around articulating social impact for community organisations and social enterprises.
- Member of Project Advisory Board on behalf of Ballyhoura Development for SocialB, an Erasmus+ project (2020 – ongoing).

Secondments:

- IfL Leipzig (Leipzig, Germany) (19 March – 18 April 2019)
Research institute with focus on (socio-)geographic research.
 - Cooperated in research meetings and internal PhD-network of this research institute. Visited external policy workshops.
 - Multi-day fieldtrip to the Uckermark region has been undertaken together with Sunna Kovanen (fellow early-stage researcher RurAction), visiting several socially innovative initiatives.
- Social Impact (Berlin, Germany) (15 July- 9 Aug 2019).
Agency promoting social entrepreneurship and social innovation in Germany.
 - Cooperated in Interreg Project ‘Sentinel’, which was focused on creating a toolbox for social entrepreneurs in rural/disadvantaged areas. Delivered a memo on current academic insights into rural social enterprises that has been used to contextualise the toolbox. Co-designed the toolbox and specific tools within the toolbox together with Social Impact colleagues.
 - Cooperated in events organised by the organisation (e.g. internal workshops and meetings).
- Stevia Hellas (Lamia, Greece) (2 Oct – 23 Oct 2020)
Farmers’ co-operative producing stevia for the European market.
 - Co-written advice on social impact measurement / social reporting standards for Stevia Hellas, together with Georgios Chatzichristos and Sunna Kovanen (both fellows early-stage researchers in RurAction).
 - Co-organised workshop to explore opportunities and barriers to economic participation experienced by woman in central Greece (Initiative from Stevia Hellas, Bridge Hub, American Embassy, Dutch Embassy) – Event for 40 women from area around Lamia and design of survey to aid in future development of program for these women. Work completed together with Georgios Chatzichristos and Sunna Kovanen (both fellows early-stage researchers in RurAction).

Other deliverables

- Collaborator RurAction policy brief: Christmann (2020) *How Social Innovation can be Supported in Structurally Weak Rural Regions*. In Collaboration with J.S. Baxter, G. Chatzichristos, H. Gruber, B. Hennebry, S. Kovanen, M. Novikova, L. Olmedo, S.W. Stoustrup, M. van Twuijver, and A. Umantseva, IRS Dialog Policy Papers, IRS, Erkner, Germany, Oct. 2020.
- Co-author of chapter in RurAction Handbook: The RurAction Network (2020), *Social Enterprises in Structurally Weak Rural Regions: Innovative Troubleshooters in Action - Handbook for Practitioners*, Authors: J.S. Baxter, G. Chatzichristos, G. Christmann, H. Gruber, B. Hennebry, S. Kovanen, M. Novikova, L. Olmedo, S.W. Stoustrup, M. van Twuijver, and A. Umantseva, IRS Dialog Policy Papers, IRS, Erkner, Germany, Nov. 2020.