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Policy narratives of sustainable entrepreneurship in the food sector

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Background

- **Part of research project funded by The Kamprad Family Foundation for Entrepreneurship, Research and Charity:** Enhancing Entrepreneurship in Rural Areas through Local Food Systems
- **My research purpose:** Identify barriers and opportunities for sustainable entrepreneurship in the local food sector

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What is sustainable entrepreneurship?

- Entrepreneurship and sustainability have become policy imperatives, including in food-related policies
- Sustainability – ambiguous concept, many ways of understanding its meaning
- Post-growth ideas have emerged as one alternative way of guiding our economic activities towards less emissions: Produce and consume less if we are to live within the planetary boundaries
- Craft or artisan production embodies many of the post-growth principles (Rennstam & Paulsson, 2024)



Examples of post-growth principles in literature

Moving from:

- Efficiency to sufficiency
- Depletion to circularity
- Competition to cooperation
- The elite to the entrepreneurs of the margins
- Value of high-growth to conservation ethics
- Lone hero to collective agency

	Guiding principles: Business and economy	Guiding principles: Consumption and allocation	Guiding principles: Relations and ownership	Guiding principles: Entrepreneurship	Guiding principles: Narratives
Banerjee et al. (2021)	From consumerism -> sufficiency Re-localization of economic activity with localized production and consumption	From extraction -> restoration From accumulation -> redistribution	From competition -> cooperation From industrial productivity -> Convivial technologies that can serve the common good		Frugal abundance as collective sufficiency
Dodd, Anderson, and Jack (2023)	From exploitation -> to coordination	From depletion -> to circularity		From the elite -> to entrepreneurs of the margins From value of high-growth -> to conservation ethics	From hero of high consumption for high growth -> to folk hero of frugal production Celebrating altruism Appreciate social, local and environmental responsibility
McGreevy et al. (2022)	From efficiency -> to sufficiency	From accumulation -> <u>to</u> distribution From extraction -> to regeneration	From control -> <u>to</u> care From private ownership -> to the commons		Self-limitation as act of care From lone heroes -> to collective agency Alternative owner structures and financing



Method and analysis

- Storyline framework: Morals, heroes, plots and settings (Brattström & Wennberg, 2022).
- Data: 23 policy documents, 3 governance levels (European context), purposive sampling, focusing on food-related policies
- The research questions:
 - What are the different entrepreneurship- and sustainability narratives present in current policies in the food sector?
 - In what way can these narratives challenge our thinking on sustainable entrepreneurship?



Examples of entrepreneurship morals, heroes, settings and plots in food policies

Dominant narrative follows growth-for-sustainability storyline

Supporting narratives in this study offered counter-narratives, showing the added value of businesses run by other logics than growth.

	Morals	Heroes	Settings	Plots
Dominant narrative	The food sector has untapped potential in terms of growth through increased production, innovations, and provision of employment opportunities	Growth-oriented and innovative entrepreneur	Global - local	Increase production, gain growth, provide employment and through these outcomes protect sustainability.
Supporting narrative I	Craft- and artisan food production contributes with important values, however this production cannot compete with big producers, nor can they provide the level of production needed for a functional food system.	Artisan or craft-producer	Urban-rural	Artisanry and small-scale producers are nice-to-have add-ons that enriches the food system, there is potential for business in the tradition and craftsmanship but mainly for high-end (urban) consumers, tourists and global markets.
Supporting narrative II	A diversity of actors in the food system is a must, from artisan to industry and everything in between	'New Swedes', young people, eco-system service providers	Borderless context	Diversity brings new knowledge, challenges assumptions, and create new innovations that can be monetized.



Implications for policies on sustainable entrepreneurship

- Challenge current meta-narratives in policies
- Empower local food production
- Imagine food production and consumption as a collective endeavor – positioning food as part of our commons



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