Understanding the Entrepreneurs Context:
A Phenomenographic Approach

Rana Zayadin

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Acknowledgments

To my mother, the reason I am, and who I am is because of you: you are mentor, my role model and my inspiration. I have learned a lot from your life and your challenges, your words of patience and perseverance have been always with me. I wish you were with me in this journey.

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Abstract

This study investigates the variation in entrepreneurs' own understanding and experience of their context. Previous research has focused either on the entrepreneur in terms of behaviour and characteristics towards opportunities or on the context and the factors that influence the entrepreneurial activity nationally, regionally or within a specific industry. These studies had a limited focus on the entrepreneur own understanding and how they reason their contextual factors based on their experience. This limitation is mainly due to the methodological approaches used in these studies. To address this limitation, I will be using phenomenography to explore the variation in entrepreneurs' own understanding and experience of context in Jordan. Jordan is a developing country situated in midst of political instability. To capture the variation in the lived experience from the entrepreneurs' perspective, I will be asking "how do entrepreneurs understand their local context; How they experience the context of regional instability? and how context is presented in training?". Underpinning the individual decision is a personal experience that needs to be captured and to understand the reasoning with which it is applied (Jones and Casulli 2014). Previous discussions of context have tended to be limited to the description of its spatial, temporal, geographic and cultural elements, and this has affected the development of theory about context and limited our understanding of context (Sarasvathay and Venkataraman, 2011; Welter, 2011; Zahra and Wright, 2011; Zahra 2007). Therefore, this research will focus on the individual level understandings and experience of context during time of regional instability; and the role of training in shaping these experiences using phenomenography as a methodology.

The result of this research will introduce "framework of entrepreneurs' context". The framework will present the entrepreneurs' understanding and experiences in contextualising their activity and the role of entrepreneurial training in shaping their understanding. As a result, context carries different meanings within entrepreneurial activity, and thus the variability in, and idiosyncratic nature of, the entrepreneurs' context is captured.

Key words: Entrepreneurship, Context; Phenomenography; Framework of Context

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Copyright Declaration

This thesis is my original work, and contains no material previously published or written except where due reference has been made in the text.

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Chapter 1 - The Promise of Entrepreneurship

1.0 Introduction

Entrepreneurship plays a central role in the economic development process, and has accordingly become a focus for academics and policymakers (Dejardin, 2000; Audretsch et al. 2006; Naudé, 2011; Ács et al., 2013; O'Connor 2013). The interest in entrepreneurship arises from its ability to stimulate economic growth, create wealth and reduce unemployment (Gorman et al., 1997; Dana, 2001; Metcalfe, 2009). Entrepreneurship has become an extensively studied but still not well understood field (Nelson and Neck, 1982; Drucker, 1985; Bygrave, 1994; Shane and Venkataraman 2000; Parker 2005). Researchers also acknowledge the role of entrepreneurs in creating new value through venture creation (Baumol, 1993). Entrepreneurs can learn and create, and they have freedom of action, regardless of the opportunities provided to them through their environment (Bruyat, 1993). The environment, however, can play a stimulating or facilitating role in increasing entrepreneurial activity (Bruyat and Julien, 2000). The field of entrepreneurship has provided a range of ways to understanding entrepreneurship (Gartner, 1988), which have led to the realization that we cannot understand entrepreneurs in isolation from their environment (Bruyat and Julien 2000), hence the focus of this research.

At this stage it is prudent to provide a definition of context. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the term "context" has two meanings: 1. The words around a word or phrase or statement to help explain the meaning; 2. The general conditions (circumstances) in which an event, action takes place. In this research the focus will be on the second definition of context in order to capture the actions associated with context.

1.1 Problem and Significance

The field of entrepreneurship research has moved away from "who" and "what" an entrepreneur is (Shane and Venkataraman, 2003); and thus away from a person-centric approach to understanding the factors that affect entrepreneurship activity (Shane, 1996; Harper, 1998; Bettignies and Brander, 2007), and into more context related approaches in which entrepreneurs articulate different narratives for their activity (Garud et al., 2014; Zahra et al., 2014).

Previous context research has focused on micro-macro approaches through identification of "what", "where" and "Who" (Whetten 2009), these are subject to continuing debate because of the fragmentation of the current context identification. The on-going debate of what the contextual factors are tended to focus on conceptual issues (see Alvarez and Barney, 2013; Autio et al. 2014), further into methodological approaches used to identify them (Foss et al. 2013) and furthermore, into the under researched role of the entrepreneurs within their context, and the variation in their understanding, experience and practice within a specific context (see Zahra and Wright, 2011; Zahra et al. 2014; Welter 2011).

This study will focus on the under-explored variation in the entrepreneurs' experience and understanding of their context, further into how individuals reason their experiences in the context of regional instability. By using a constructionist approach to gain an insight into the entrepreneurs' own world to help us improve the current understandings of the role of context and further develop theories and frameworks to capture its dynamic role (Bamberger 2015; Zahra 2011, Zahra et al. 2014).

1.0 Critiquing Previous Research on Context and Entrepreneurship

Previous research has focused on the role of context for opportunity identification and exploitation (Alvarez and Barney 2013; Foss et al. 2013). Further investigation into the role of context and its impact on the entrepreneurial activity was presented by Zahra, Wright and Abdelgawad (2014) and Welter (2011). In fact, research in entrepreneurship has taken two approaches: *first approach is agent-centric* (Garud et al. 2014; Gartner 1985; McMullen and Shepherd 2006; Zhao et al, 2005) focusing on entrepreneurs' behaviours and individual characteristics as the basis to answer the question why some people are more likely to identify and exploit opportunities. This field of research emphasized personality traits, including locus of control, need for achievement, risk taking, self-efficacy and self-belief (Low and MacMillan, 1988; Markman et al. 2002; Zhao et al. 2005). The research over emphasized the importance of these personal trait in relation to their ability to recognize opportunities and risk taking. As research progressed mixed results in findings and correlations between personality traits and entrepreneurial activity emerged, other findings have found no significant relations, some findings even reported contrary expectations (see Brandstatter 2011; Ciavarella et al. 2004). Researchers have attributed these inconsistencies in findings due to failing to consider the role of context and only focusing on personal attributes (Hjorth et al. 2008). As research

progressed, entrepreneurs moved away from personality into entrepreneurial cognition or as Mitchell et al. (2002, p. 97) defined it "the knowledge structures that people use to make assessment, judgements or decisions"; and pointed out that entrepreneurs have a different way of thinking than others (Baron and Ward, 2004; Gregoire et al. 2011). These researches have also been critiqued as the reasons to reach these conclusions didn't consider the environmental factors. Finally, researchers have explored different agent-centric factors and introduced different explanations and mechanisms to their decision-making processes and self-efficacy, but they under-emphasized the challenges in their environment (see Thornton 1999; Zahra and Wright 2011).

This led researchers into taking a different approach into *context-centric*, focusing on how the environment plays a role in presenting opportunities for the entrepreneurs. Context research on national, regional and industry contexts in relation to opportunity identification (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994; Zahra and Wright 2011) and the important role of context stems not only in presenting opportunities but also the dynamics they present that can influence the different trajectories into the entrepreneurial activity (Powell et al. 2012). As the research progressed into the national context; systems such as national innovation systems (Freeman 1987; Lundvall, 2010; Porter 1990) and national entrepreneurship systems (Acs and Audretsch 2014; Garud et al. 2011) were presented into the field. These researchers have looked at different factors within the national parameter such as the level of support for entrepreneurs, the venture capital and level of funding available; research and development opportunities and networks between government and private sector and the competition in markets and industries (Audretch et al. 2011; Furman and Hayes 2004; Hu and Mathews 2008). Researchers, further looked into applying these national systems into different countries and comparing between developed, emerging and developing economies (Gupta and Wang 2009; Hoskisson et al. 2013) which introduced further inconsistencies and proved that these systems are unique for each country (Acs et al. 2011; Naude 2010). Furthermore, research into regional context introduced contextual factor for the entrepreneurial activity including clusters, spill-over of knowledge (Powell et al. 2012; Saxenian 1996) and spinoffs of entrepreneurial activity (McCann and Folta 2008; Robinson et. Al. 2007), regional resources available such as talent and technology (Florida 1995) and the dynamics these enterprises and activities can create.

These studies have shown the differences in contextual factors that affect the entrepreneurial activity from one place to another, including technology, regulations and learning showing

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differences in outcomes between regions (Garud and Karnoe 2003; Hendry and Harborne 2011). Including dynamics between entities such as technology providers and universities were also considered as regional resources that can influence the entrepreneurial activity, as a result of regional parameters and spill-over effects (Saxenian 1996, 1999; Marx, 2011). These concepts of context have extended researchers' insights to offer additional facets of contexts such as; spatial, temporal, market and institutions (Zahra et al. 2014; Welter 2011) and examining their role in the entrepreneurial activity but also failed to report on the entrepreneurs' narratives and story-telling. This is important because it captures how entrepreneurs connect existing resources and skills with new outcomes and how they utilize their knowledge and work experience (Kocak and Abimbola, 2009; Jones et al. 2014). Therefore, reporting on their narratives plays a pivotal role in capturing their understanding.

The leading work of Welter (2011) and Zahra, Wright and Abdulgawad (2014) have attempted to capture the different aspects of the entrepreneurs' context. Yet, there research was context-centric, in that they have identified contextual factors at micro and macro levels with an attempt to do some cross level linking and multi-level understanding of the role of context. Their research didn't capture the entrepreneurs' own perspective of context and there has been limited multi-level interaction between local and regional contexts. Furthermore, research on the variation in the entrepreneurs' own understanding of these factors has been limited. This is mainly due to the methodological approaches used in previous research being relational, looking at the entrepreneurs independently from their context. This has introduced further limitations into the field.

In this research the variation in entrepreneurs' understanding and experiences of their context will be captured. Using a constructionist lens the context will be identified from the entrepreneurs' own perspective forming one unit in a non-relational, non-dualistic approach that seeks to explore variation in how they experience various aspects of their world. Furthermore, Garud et al. (2014) discussed the entrepreneurs – context relations towards innovation and have identified the entrepreneurs innovate through three facets, relational, temporal and performative. Entrepreneurs innovate through narratives in the past, present and future and generate meaning to innovate. The research didn't present empirical data to capture the entrepreneurs' own stories of their context and how they interpret it. This had researchers call for further research into understanding the different agent-context relations and how

entrepreneurs' articulate the different context factors within their activities (Bamberger et al. 2015; Garud et al. 2014; Zahra and Wright 2011; Zahra et al. 2014).

In addition, previous research has looked at the role of training programmes from behaviour-changing aspects but didn't capture the entrepreneurs' perspective. Abilities and skills provided to entrepreneurs through training and business qualification play a role in self-confidence needed to recognise and act on opportunities in times of instability (Xheneti and Bartlett, 2012). So it is important to identify these issues from the entrepreneurs' own understanding and experiences. As Casulli (2011, p. 51) points out "Because individual experience is idiosyncratic, ensuing reasoning processes are also likely to reflect unique individual experiences".   While we know that experiences among individuals influence their behaviours and decision-making process, what individuals take from their experiences and how they understand new contextual factors in still under-explored (Casulli et al. 2014; Lamb et al. 2011). Furthermore, learning is a complex, individuals may link their learning with certain components of their experiences (Michailova & Wilson, Zahra, Korri and Yu, 2005), furthering its role as an idiosyncratic approach. The concept of experience is under theorized in entrepreneurship as reported by Jones and Casulie (2014).

The table below summarises the different approaches taken in the field of research on context and the limitations identified in the field of research.

Table 1.1: research perspectives in entrepreneurship context

Research Focus	Research Approaches		Context in Education	Research Limitations	Researchers
	Agent-Centric	Context-Centric			
- Personality - Cognition and behaviours - Context in research	- Focused on who is an entrepreneur (entrepreneurial agency) - Research captured entrepreneurs' attributes and characteristics - Context is not primarily considered	- Macro-micro contextual factors (spatial, temporal, industry & market) entrepreneurship dominated the field with focus on one and limited cross level research - Institutional factors and their influence on entrepreneurs' behaviour - National, and Regional	- Focused on the learning pedagogical approaches - Behavioural change in persons and their ability to identify opportunity - Limited research addressed role of training in addressing contextual factors	- Variation in entrepreneurs' experience of their context is under explored - The concept of experience is under-theorized in entrepreneurship context research - Methodological approaches, realist, dualist approaches dominated the field	Gartner, 1985; McMullen and Shepherd, 2006; Bandura 1977; Chen et al. 1998; Zhao et al. 2005; Ciavarella et al. 2004; Brandstatter 2011; Hjorth et al. 2008; Gregoire et al. 2011; Thornton 1999; Zahra and Wright 2011; Garud et al. 2014; Jones and Casulli, 2013. Aldrich and Fiol, 1994; Saxenian 1996, 1999; Marx, 2011; Audretch et al. 2011; Furman and Hayes 2004; Hu and Mathews 2008; Garud and Karnoe 2003; Hendry and Harborne 2011

Context is a set of unique factors that influence the entrepreneurial activity; therefore, it is important to understand it in different settings. To take for example how each dimension is unique, previous research has confirmed the positive role of institutions in helping entrepreneurs identify their opportunities and facilitate their growth (Sarasvathy et al 2003). According to Xheneti and Bartlett (2012) in the context of instability institutions can act as barriers to entrepreneurship and business growth, as a result, social constraints such as norms of behaviour and process of problem-solving are highly enacted in these contexts. The context of time (temporal) plays a significant role in the entrepreneurial opportunity and decision-making processes. The temporal context presents a diversity of issues that attributes to the entrepreneurs' decision making and changes of their trajectories over time as explained by Zahra et al. (2014), leading to further calls to understand its role.

The role of place introduces another context of how ventures learn about other culture and how entrepreneurs seek markets and venture capital from other countries (Welter 2011; Zahra and Wright 2011; Zahra et al. 2014). Research focused on the physical distance and organizational learning; further into the decision to internationalize. Context play a different role in each setting, therefore research into the local and regional contexts and how it influences the entrepreneurs' trajectories needs further investigation especially in the context of regional political instability and among entrepreneurs within the same community. Research into the role of culture, social and institutional contexts has reported idiosyncratic effects on the entrepreneurial activities based on the different environments that have been researched (Welter 2011; Xhenati and Bartlett 2012). Further limitation in previous research, is the role of culture within a regional context among countries that share the same culture, language and values, and the role of culture and its influence on the entrepreneurial activity. This also emphasises the importance of studying context in its unique settings (Zahra et al. 2014). Therefore, taking each context independently can extend our understanding of the role of these contextual factors. It is important to report the entrepreneurs' understanding of the particular meaning and context-specific peculiarities as described by Zahra, Wright and Abdelgawad (2014). What these researches have failed to report is the entrepreneurs' understanding and experiences and the process of linking prior experience with a new situation influenced by the individuals' context (Jones et al. 2014).

The fragmentation in the field of research has allowed researchers to pick and choose the contextual factors and introduce micro-macro approaches to understanding the role of context (Bamberger et al. 2015), without paying much attention to the entrepreneurs' role within their context. This choosing coupled with limited empirical fieldwork has added to the overall confusion and lack of theory and framework development (Sarasvathy and Venkataraman 2011; Zahra et al. 2014). In addition, to the philosophical and methodological approaches used in researching context in entrepreneurship (Zahra et al. 2014; Welter 2011) have also contributed to these limitations. Previous explanations of entrepreneurship were dominated by realist approaches that assumed that reality is an objective existence independent of individual perceptions (according to Popper 1979; and cited by Alvarez et al. 2010). Through realist lens researchers have looked at the entrepreneurs and their world in terms of entrepreneurs/opportunities nexus (Shane 2003), as a result the contextual factors were captured through a realist lens that focused on the relation between the entrepreneurs and their context rather than the entrepreneurs within their context.

Therefore, the research question guiding this study is "how do entrepreneurs understand local context and how they experience context of regional instability?" "How context was presented in training?" to answer these questions, a constructionist approach will be used to introduce the entrepreneurs' reality as social product that is experienced through social interactions and perceptions of their world by capturing their stories, according to Kuhn (1970) and Berger and Luckmann (1967). Presenting the entrepreneurs' own understanding and experience of their context and the multiplicity role of contextual factors that shape their experience and understanding. Previous studies didn't distinct between experience in terms of sense making or reasoning and expertise as knowledge, skills and abilities (Reuber 1997; Casillas et al. 2009).

The shift in philosophical perspective is needed to introduce new insights into context by moving away from the realist approach into a constructionist. The primary difference between realists and constructionists is, realists explain the observable and non-observable sides of a phenomena as if it is observable, while the constructionists explain the subject matter through interpretive understanding of particular actions that explain the non-observable side of the phenomena (Azevedo, 2002). Constructionist approach have been instrumental in understanding how opportunities are formed and exploited introducing further theories of affectation (see Sarasvathy 2001). Through constructionist approach entrepreneurs interpret a phenomenon and give it a meaning that is different from other's interpretation and subjective to

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their own experiences and understanding (Alvarez et al. 2010). Entrepreneurs create realities and form their actions to these realities (Katz & Gartner 1988). Through the interpretations of their knowledge and information the idiosyncratic relationships with their resources are presented (Baker and Nelson, 2005; Mahoney and Michael 2005).

Furthering our understanding into the role of context in this research is current and relevant in a novel setting and to analyse the role of context (Zahra et. al 2014; Welter 2011). This research, therefore, builds on and extends our understanding of the role of context by examining the agent-context relations through the variation in the entrepreneurs understanding and experience of their context during a time of regional political instability in Jordan. Further into the role of training programmes in shaping their understanding.

1.1 Previous Approaches to the Research of Entrepreneurship Context

The basic premise of social sciences is that there is a dynamic interplay between individual level factors and all other factors associated with the environment. These interactions are complex, but examining these dynamics can help us understand the social reality through a broader range of paradigms and perspectives, through which we can then explain the relations between structures, the environment and time frames on the one side, and attitudes, cognition and behaviour on the other. In other words, the social sciences seek to understand how individuals shape their context, and how they are shaped by it. As further explained by Bamberger et al. (2015), a true social sciences approach to context goes beyond the sensitization of theory to possible situational and temporal constraints but seeks directly to specify the kind of influence these factors are likely to have on the activity. Previous research was limited in this regard for the following reasons: using a behaviourist and cognitivist approaches have focused on the change in the entrepreneurs' behaviour especially in training programmes. These perspectives used a dualistic, relational focusing on the entrepreneurs and their world as two separate entities. As explained by Jonassen (1991) behaviourist and cognitivist perspectives are combined as objectivism which doesn't ask the question about individuals and their world.

This presented limitation in the field of research as following: first, the research approach has been top-down, focusing on the higher-level contexts; second the research addressed either the entrepreneur or their context didn't capture the entrepreneur within their context; third the variation in the entrepreneurs' experiences and understanding within the same community has

been limited. These limitations are due to methodologies used have not been designed to capture the individuals' own perspectives to include a bottom-up approach and to capture context from the entrepreneurs' own perspective. This thesis extends previous research to seek to identify the entrepreneur within their context and capture the variation in understanding.

An appropriate methodological approach is therefore central to meeting the aim of this research. Previous methodological approaches have focused on quantitative approaches to build hypotheses to understand context. Other research approaches investigated the different context factors through asking questions such as what, who, where, when and how to capture the differences in the environmental factors (Whetten, 2009) these questions generalized the experiences and dealt with context as external factors rather than context as part of the entrepreneurs lived experience. Interpretative qualitative research can produce a deeper understanding and generate a fuller meaning of the role of context. Interpretive, qualitative research can explain the different meanings (Bamberger, 2015) as experienced by each individual which has been limited in previous research. It is important to move away from the positivistic approach, which is underpinned by rationalistic and objectivistic assumptions that are in turn based on separating the entrepreneurs from their world and studying each independently in an objective manner (Sandberg, 1994). By looking at entrepreneurs within their context as a single unit through constructionist lens, the research results are focused on relationships and on the dynamics and complexity of the context (Westwood, 2004). Using entrepreneurs' perspectives can provide a deeper understanding of entrepreneurship through different levels of analysis only a constructionist, non-dualist approach can provide (Hackman, 2003; Welter, 2010).

To understand the role of context in entrepreneurship, we therefore need to focus on understanding the individual's role. Entrepreneurs in their contexts are active individuals and they adapt to their environment and contribute to sustaining themselves. This research will focus on the entrepreneurs' own experience of local context at time of regional political instability in Jordan and further into the role of training in defining their context. This shift in approach will present bottom-up behaviours, grounding higher level understanding to present complex forms of interactions and mechanism in the cognitive world of the entrepreneurs (Barandiaran et al., 2009). Researchers have considered the context in which entrepreneurship occurs (Zahra et al., 2014; Cabral et al., 2013; Bjørnskov and Foss, 2013; Foss et al., 2013; Sarasvathy and Venkataraman, 2011; Ucbasaran et al., 2001), but have not considered

entrepreneurs' perspectives of their context. Although previous research findings are not set to be the same for each case, but understanding its role in each case can help us know the factors that enable or constrain it (Welter 2011). While we know that the variety and level of experience play a role in the individuals' behaviours, what individuals take from their experiences and how they understand new contextual factors are still under explored (Jones et al. 2014; Lamb et al. 2011). Therefore, a shift in research approach to consider the entrepreneurs and their context as one unit in their natural setting will enable new insights to emerge.

To understand the role of context and to set the boundaries of the study, two bodies of knowledge were investigated. One was the various literature about context and entrepreneurship. The second is empirical, capturing the variation of entrepreneurs' understanding and experience by investigating local context, context of regional political instability and the role of training programmes is shaping these experiences. Using phenomenography as a research approaches presents a novel approach to capture the role of context in the entrepreneurial activity. Through phenomenography, context is captured in terms of structure of awareness presenting the variation in understanding and experience of context as recognized by each entrepreneur.

By adopting phenomenography, I move away from realist, positivistic approach, which is underpinned by rationalistic and objectivistic assumptions. These assumptions are based on separating the entrepreneurs from their world. Studying each independently in an objectivistic manner (Sandberg, 1994). Therefore, a constructionist, non-dualistic approach will be adopted and the analytical framework of experience of Marton and Booth (1997) in which the phenomenon forms a "structure of awareness". This is an active process since the different perspectives of the context present the structure of the thematic field lead to a stronger relationship between different aspects of the phenomenon. The phenomenon (i.e. context) is experienced in different ways leading to different structures of awareness (Booth, 1997), furthering our understanding of the entrepreneurs and context dynamics.

1.2 Situating the Research

Context was used as the unit of analysis, against which the activity is measured. These researches stop short of theorizing how entrepreneurs contextualise their activities, hence the continued calls from researchers to consider entrepreneurs within their context and factoring

them into a theory (see Zahra and Wright 2011; Zahra et al. 2014; Welter 2011). Furthermore, the story telling part of how context is experienced is missing from previous research and not accounted for (Zahra, 2007; Sarasvathy and Venkataraman, 2011; Welter, 2011; Zahra and Wright, 2011). The importance of including the storytelling perspective is an appreciation of the efforts by actors to organize and permeate experiences with meaning (Bruner 1986; Garud et al. 2014). Entrepreneurs' narrative deals with contexts in a different way, as Gabriel (2000 p. 41) explains "individuals neither accept nor reject reality, instead they seek to shape it and infuse it with meaning". Previous research didn't include the storytelling part due to methodological approaches, the focus has been relational and quantitative in identifying contextual factors. In addition, research in entrepreneurs' own experiences has been partially presented through firms as expertise (Reuber 1997; Casillas et al. 2009).

Previous research approaches towards understanding context have predominantly used "pre-research" methods. These approaches have focused on the situational and temporal contingencies through which a certain context becomes the focal point of research without much attention to the patterns around them. The insights gathered from such approaches can produce new context-related constructs while dropping others (Bamberger, 2015). This has limited our understanding of the micro contexts as identified by the entrepreneurs and how they interact within the different levels of macro-micro contexts within the same community. Therefore, it is prudent to reframe and refocus our research on the idiosyncratic nature of context and connect the contextual factors with the activities which introduces primacy of the entrepreneur as an individual.

1.3 Outline of the Research

The research captures different aspects of context through the constructionist and non-dualistic approach into the entrepreneurs' own understanding and experience of their context. To capture the different aspects of context, two bodies of knowledge were investigated. The first is literature review of previous research on context and the different research approaches used to capture the entrepreneurs' context. The second is empirical analysis of the entrepreneurs' own perspective of their contexts. The theoretical framework guiding this study is the analytical model of Marton and Booth's (1997). The body of knowledge capturing the variation of the entrepreneurs' understanding and experience of context is identified through an empirical phenomenographic study. Through phenomenograhic research I attempt to describe qualitative variation in the way a group of individuals experience a phenomenon in the world (Marton, 1986). The model introduces two aspects: the "how" aspect relates to the approach of learning about the phenomenon and the "what" aspect concerns the level of understanding of the phenomenon. In this research, context is analysed and described in terms of the separate aspects of "what" and "how" context is experienced and understood in terms of the relationship with the entrepreneurial activity.

Data from entrepreneurs from the Jordanian business incubator, Oasis 500, was collected through semi-structured interviews. Data analysis involved a phenomenogrphic analysis of interview transcripts introduced outcome spaces depicting qualitative variation in the "what" and "how" aspects of context. The analysis above will introduce frameworks presenting the entrepreneurs' structure of awareness, as described by Marton and Booth (1997). The framework of awareness is described in three overlapping areas: the margin, the thematic field and the theme. Introducing, "what" and "how" aspects, and the relationship between them. Using the structure of awareness captures both the understanding and the experiences of the entrepreneurs allowing us to have an insight into their world and further our understanding of their context. This insight will further our understanding of context and its role in enabling the entrepreneurial activity by focusing on the entrepreneurs in their natural setting.

The empirical data about the entrepreneurs' experiences of context in training and their understanding of context was identified and described through the same approach. In this study the variation in entrepreneurs' understanding and experience of their context will be captured.

Presented through outcome spaces of these variations in understanding and experience are generated. The second stage included investigating the relationship between "what" and "how" aspects. Then, the results of the phenomenographic study were presented in a hierarchy of qualitatively different experiences and understandings of context, according of the model of Marton and Booth (1997). The hierarchy refers to the different ways the phenomenon is experienced. More complex categories would have more aspects identified within that category, which together present a deep understanding of the phenomenon. Less complex categories refer to fewer aspects and will come lower down in the hierarchy. The model is significant since it provides a framework for analysing and describing the various understanding and experiencing of context. While the "what" and "how" are inseparable in practice, the model allows these different aspects to be analysed separately allowing for the relationship between the aspects to be investigated and described (Marton and Booth 1997). The aim is on seeking meaning of the context being investigated through relating the various parts of context and its role in their activity.

1.3.1 Defining Understanding and Experiences

Understanding is an important aspect in phenomenographic research. Understanding is socially constructed and reconstructed through individuals' ongoing experience and relationship with their world. It represents the individuals' relationship with their reality and answers questions such as "what is it?", "how does it work?", "How does it concern me?" (Sandberg and Targama, 2007, p. 110). Every individual develops an independent understanding through their own interaction with the world and through social engagement with others in society. Such understandings are personal and embodied within the individual, they are learned through social practices and inextricably connected to individuals and their experiences of their world.

Understandings are established relative to the individuals' world, since they are the result of on-going interactions and are continually constructed and reconstructed, and therefore are not static but adaptive and changeable. As Sandberg and Targama (2007, p. 110) explain, understandings are "always in process and under continuous development", therefore they can be transformed, refined and modified based on individuals' changing perception of reality. It is therefore crucial in this study to capture both the "practice context" and the experience of

context from the entrepreneurs' perspective. Their understandings are formed through their social engagements and the contexts within which they operate and conduct their activity.

Experience matter because it forms our understanding of the world we live in. Through experiences we reason the challenges. It is a process that requires awareness and involvement, and it involves doing, observing or living the events as they unfold (Goffam, 1974; Lamb et al. 2011; Morris et al. 2012). In times of complexity, uncertainty and risk, the environmental factors play a significant role in determining the action (Simon 1972). During these times individuals rely on their experience and knowledge to deal with novel and complex situations (Jones et al. 2014; Figueria-De-Lemos et al. 2011). Experience is intrinsic to reasoning and experience at the individual level is under-theorized in entrepreneurship research, as it is often examined as a concept at the firm level in terms of experiential knowledge (Casillas et al, 2009; Jones and Casulli 2013).   Hence the focus of this research is to capture the experiences and understanding of the entrepreneurs as individuals using a phenomenographic perspective.

Through phenomenography the relationship between the learner and the world is non-dualistic; i.e. learners are not considered separately from their world. Through phenomenography I confirm that the entrepreneurs' world is one, and not separated into an objective outside world and an internally constructed subjective world. As explained by Ramsden et al. (1993, p. 303) "There is only one world to which we have access – the world-as-experienced". Understanding and experiencing, therefore, form a single unit, in the entrepreneurs' world but these experiences differ from one person to the other.
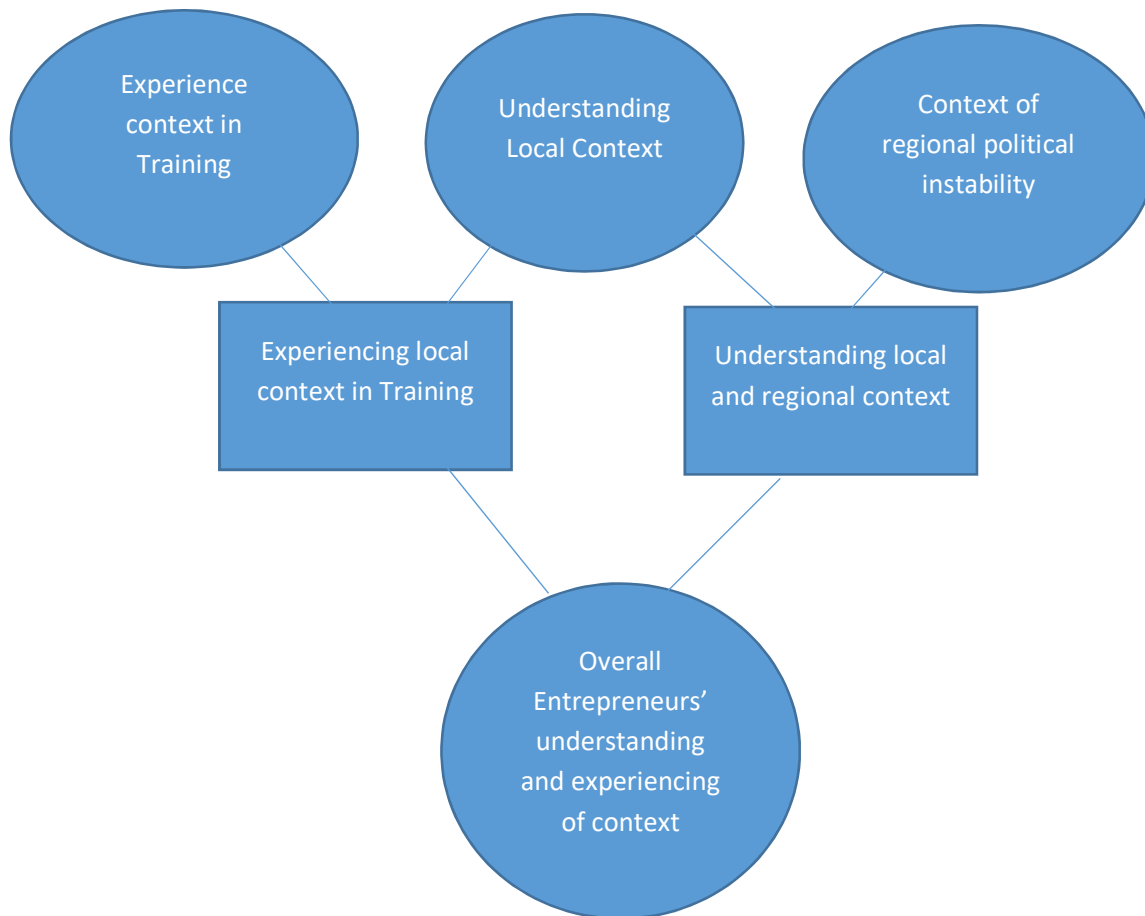
Figure 1.0: Bringing the different aspects of the analytical model together

Based on the above outline of the study, it is evident that the thesis contributes the field of research. The contribution is addressing the variation in the entrepreneurs' understanding and experience of their context through a novel methodological approach that allowed an insight into the entrepreneurs' world and captured the interplay between the different contexts and the role of training in shaping these contexts. This research will further introduce a framework of understanding which previous researchers have called for (see Garud et al. 2014; Zahra and Wright 2007; Zahra et al. 2014; Welter 2011). By understanding the role of context, we understand the factors that enables or constrain the entrepreneurial activity (Zahra et al. 2007).

1.4 Structure of the thesis

This thesis comprises 8 chapters including this chapter. Chapter 2: Context and the Emergent Research Gaps, examines and critiques the previous research into the context of entrepreneurship. Chapter 3: Research Strategy and Orientation, examines the various interpretive research methodologies and introduces phenomenography as the appropriate research methodology for this study. Chapter 4: Strategies for Collecting Empirical Data, explains the strategies used when selecting and collecting empirical data, and the protocol followed when conducting and documenting the interviews. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 present the data analysis and the structures of awareness produced through answering the research questions. Chapter 5: Understanding the Entrepreneurs' Local Context, presents the entrepreneurs' own definitions and understanding of what the local context means to them. Chapter 6: The Context of Regional Political Instability, examines how the entrepreneurs experience the context of regional political instability in Jordan. Chapter 7: Entrepreneurs' Experience of Context in Training Programmes, captures the entrepreneurs' experience of context in training programmes. Chapter 8: The Entrepreneurs' Understanding and Experience of Context, brings the three areas of research and introduces the Framework of Entrepreneurs' Context. The different roles of context are conceptualized as part of entrepreneurial activity and the entrepreneurs' characteristics and behaviours within the different contexts. The different dimensions of contexts, both local and regional, are introduced, and shown how these dimensions present five qualitatively different understandings. Further the two dimensions of experience of context in training programmes are introduced. The contributions of this work are then synthesized with previous research findings on context, revealing further implications and research opportunities.

Chapter 2 – Theoretical underpinning and the field of research

2.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the problem addressed by this research was outlined. The entrepreneurs' own understanding of context is under researched. Consequently, previous methodological approaches to context research have focused on a realist and dualistic approaches presenting the relation between the entrepreneur and their context as two separate entities. The interest in understanding the role of context in entrepreneurial activity stems from the increased calls to theorise the role of context and to bring it to the forefront of research (Ucbasaran et al., 2001; Sarasvathy and Venkataraman, 2011; Foss et al., 2013). Researchers are trying to understand the relationship between multi-contexts and their influence on the entrepreneurial activity (OECD, 1997; Bruyat, 2000; GEM, 2004; Acs et al., 2014; Walsh and Huang, 2014). The underlying message among all these calls is to focus on context and introduce a framework of context in entrepreneurship to enhance our understanding.

The aims of this chapter are twofold: 1. To introduce the phenomenographic perspective which forms the theoretical background for this study. 2. To develop from the theoretical background the critical aspects and the research questions that will be investigated in this study.

2.1 A Phenomenographic perspective on Context

Phenoemonography is a relatively new approach and mostly used in the educational research. Phenomenography has emerged from empirical basis and only recently its theoretical basis has further developed (Akerlind 2005; Bowden and Walsh, 2000; Marton and Booth, 1998). These theoretical developments have introduced the variation theory of learning and awareness, which is used as approaches to learning and teaching (Marton and Tsui, 2004). The underlying notion of phenomenographic research is to capture the variation in human meaning, understanding, conceptions and ways of experiencing a phenomenon (Marton, 1981, Marton and Booth 1997). An analytical framework used to describe a phenomenographic perspective and to consider key aspects of variation, (Lave 1996). These aspects are framed in form of questions in this thesis as following:

1. What relation is assumed to exist between the entrepreneurs and their context, how do they understand their context?
2. How do entrepreneurs experience the context of regional instability in relation to their activity?
3. How did they learn about their context in training programmes?

The phenomenographic perspective on context investigated in this thesis is considered in terms of these three questions.

1. How do entrepreneurs understand their local context?

From a phenomenographic perspective, the relationship between the person and their world is non-dualistic. The person and the world are not considered as separate entities. Therefore, we can't assume that the entrepreneurs and their context are separate. Entrepreneurs operate within a certain context. Different people will have different experiences in the world, this constitute the unique internal relationships with the world (Marton and Booth 1997). Therefore, from a non-dualistic, phenomenographic perspective there is only one world for the entrepreneur to experience.

2. How do they experience the context of regional instability?

The way individuals experience a phenomenon is considered synonymous to the level or depth of their understanding of their world. Therefore, entrepreneurs need to learn and understand how the regional political instability can influence their activity. The internal relationship involves more experiences. Individuals understand changes as result of new experiences and the new context of instability presents a new experience. Therefore, the more complex the experience the deeper the understanding and these vary from one person to another.

To further explain the way of experiencing a phenomenon and the change implied is explained through the structure of awareness, based on the field of consciousness by Gurwitsch (1964). The description of the structure of awareness is prominently associated with Marton and Booth (1997), who used a structure of awareness to analyse and describe the different ways individuals experience a phenomenon. A description of a structure of awareness is introduced in Figure 2.1:
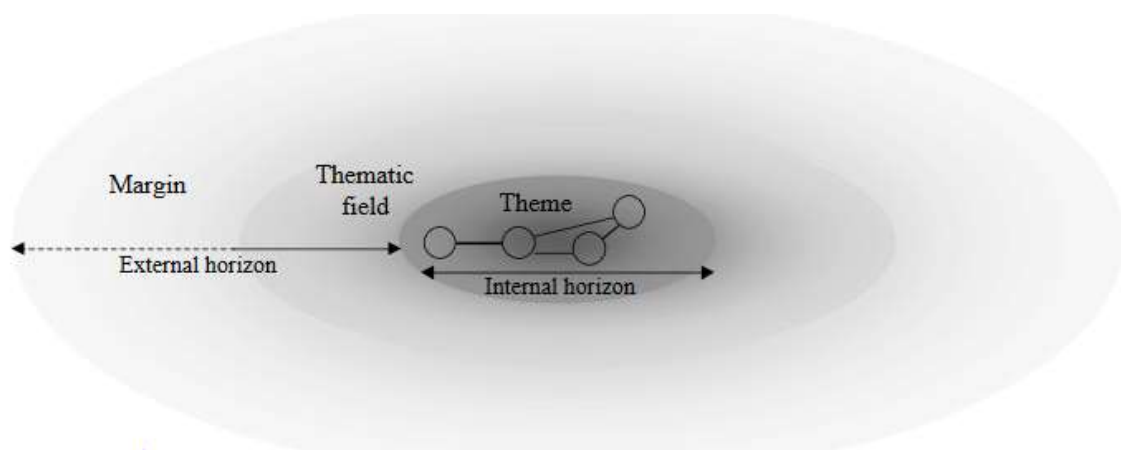
Figure 3.1: Structure of Awareness as introduced by Marton and Booth (1997)

The theory suggests that an individual's awareness is likely to consist of aspects of the phenomenon triggered by their context. The internal relationship between the individual and the phenomenon (in this study the context), changes as a result of new or stronger experiences of the phenomenon, in addition to more or stronger relationships between experiences. During this process the individual reconstruct complex ways of experiencing the phenomenon leading to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. This suggests that awareness is made up of three overlapping areas: the margin, the thematic field and the theme. When considering a phenomenon at a particular time and in a particular context, the aspects of structure of awareness are present in awareness and are known collectively as the thematic field. Marton and Booth (1997, p.87) give an example of experiencing a deer in the woods to further explain and illustrate the difference and the relationship between internal and external horizons:

> "the external horizon of coming on the deer in the woods extends from the immediate boundary of the experience – the dark forest against which the deer is discerned – through all other contexts in which related occurrences have been experienced (e.g. walks in the forest, deer in the zoo, nursery tales, reports of hunting incidents, etc.). The internal horizon comprises the deer itself, its parts, its stance, its structural presence. The aspects of the phenomenon which are discerned as part of the internal horizon of awareness have been called dimensions of variation".

Individuals are also aware of other aspects of the world not considered to be related to the phenomenon which make up the margin of awareness. The related aspects to the phenomenon making up the thematic field will emerge and become the focus of awareness. These aspects

form the theme of awareness and are focal in awareness. These aspects are also dependent on the context in which the phenomenon is being considered by the individual. A structure of awareness is also formed by an external and an internal horizon (Marton and Booth, 1997). The internal horizon consists of the aspects of the phenomenon present in the theme of awareness. This introduces a complete and a whole relationship between the aspects of the internal horizon and the phenomenon. Meanwhile, the external horizon consists of the thematic field and the margin, which are part of awareness at a particular instant but which are not thematic. The external horizon, as an area of awareness, forms the context in which the theme sits. The boundary between the external and internal horizons delimits the theme from its context.

Furthermore, to discern an aspect of a phenomenon in a specific context, we need to recognize the potential for variation. The way to recognize that means that the aspect needs to be experienced as having different characteristics from a range of potential characteristics. In so far as a specific aspect of a phenomenon is related to the phenomenon as a whole and the aspect has a potential for variation, then that aspect can be recognized as a dimension of variation of the phenomenon. A discerned aspect of a phenomenon can then be considered as a dimension of variation of the phenomenon with a specific value within the potential variation (Marton, 1998; Cope, 2011).

Through phenomenography, a structure of awareness is established when describing a way of experiencing a phenomenon. The description should incorporate the internal and external horizons, and a referential aspect i.e. the meaning inherent in the structure. As described by Cope (2004 p.12) and based on Marton (1998) and Marton and Booth (1997), the way of experiencing a phenomenon through a structure of awareness is as follows:

> "The detail of the structural aspect should include the dimensions of variation present in the internal horizon, including the "values" of each dimension of variation, the existence and nature of relationships between these dimensions of variation, and the nature of the boundary between the internal and external horizons. The different categories of description of a phenomenon constituting an outcome space must, logically, differ with respect to the number of dimensions of variation and/or a new "value" in a dimension of variation and/or new or stronger relationships between dimensions of variation and a change in the nature of the boundary between the internal and external horizons."

Interpretive awareness means that the researcher's interpretations during the process of data analysis have been controlled and checked using an analytical framework of "structure of awareness". Each step of the analysis is related to an aspect of the structure of awareness. The relationship between the interpretation of data and the analytical framework can be recognized through the structure of awareness (Cope, 2004).

The results of phenomenographic studies have consistently exhibited that a phenomenon is experienced in a limited number of qualitatively different ways (see Johansson, Marton and Svensson, 1995; Cope 2005). The different ways of experiencing a phenomenon are presented in a hierarchy of levels of complexity. The hierarchal structure is identified in the conceptions, i.e. the lower conceptions in the hierarchy represent the simpler or more fragmented view of the phenomenon. The higher level conceptions, meanwhile, represents more complex ways of understanding the world. The hierarchy is generally based on logical differences, complexity and inclusiveness using the structure of awareness (Marton and Booth, 1997). According to Marton and Booth, a way of experiencing a phenomenon can be described as a structure of awareness. A structure of awareness contains a theme that is made up of aspects of a phenomenon that are related in a particular way. The different ways of experiencing a phenomenon involves, more or less, aspects which are presented in the thematic awareness as being potentially related in different ways. The more complex themes involve more aspects, or better defined relationships between aspects, and will therefore be higher in the hierarchy. Through the structure of awareness, the findings of qualitatively different ways of understanding the same phenomenon is captured.

3. How did they learn about their context in training programmes?

From a phenomenographic perspective the mechanism of learning happens as a result of a complex way of experiencing a phenomenon. This presents the role of training programmes and its role in shaping their understanding of context. The aspects of the phenomenon which are discerned and their various relationships are part of the theme of awareness. Therefore, potential for variation needs to be recognized. To explain further how we experience a variation in a phenomenon is described by Marton (1998, p. 183):

> "we make sense of new situations in terms of their critical features. These critical features are dimensions of variation constituted by the new situation and the previous ones which it resembles in critical respects."

Therefore, experiencing a new situation in light of previous experiences can result in recognizing a new value for a dimension of variation of the phenomenon we have experienced in the past. So, how do we recognize new or meaningful relationships between discerned dimensions of variations? The mechanism of learning lies in the dynamic part of awareness, an effective learner constantly brings different perspectives of a restructuring awareness and therefore, learning. To explain further, a shift of perspective on a phenomenon can reconfigure the thematic field in terms of aspect relevance to the phenomenon, and move from the margin to thematic field as a result. The individual moves back and forth between different perspectives of the phenomenon and their thematic field and themes structures. Awareness is dynamic and is a result of continual restricting of awareness by the learner. The structure of the themes becomes richer in relationships presenting the complex and meaningful ways the phenomenon is experienced (Booth 1997).

In summary, the phenomeographic perspective implies that a phenomenon is experienced in a more complex way. Different dimensions of variation or different relationships between aspects, or between the phenomenon are discerned in different ways. Learning takes place through experiencing different perspectives on a phenomenon. These perspectives vary with regard to the aspects of the phenomenon and how they are understood by individuals. The variation is integrated into other related dimensions of variation leading to a change in the structure of awareness, presenting the way of experiencing the phenomenon (Cope 2005), introducing a new lens through which we can further our understanding of context.

This section has introduced the phenomenographic perspective which presents the theoretical and methodological approach underlying this thesis. The underpinnings of this perspective are: first, a non-dualistic view of the relation between the individual and the world (i.e. the entrepreneurs and their contexts). Second, learning involves a change in the way of experiencing a phenomenon through experiencing variation with respect of the phenomenon (i.e. training contribute to furthering the entrepreneurs understanding of their context). Third, the variation in understanding and experiences is presented in a structure of awareness representing a hierarchy of complexity of how each individual experience context.

2.4 Jordan and the MENA Region

Geographically, the Arab world includes twenty-two countries spread over the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, including some parts of Asia. The recent uprisings, known as the "Arab Spring", have served as a catalyst for transformation in the region. Major negative consequences have been that the region has the highest diaspora population in the world, especially among professional and skilled individuals. This presents a critical loss of human capital that might otherwise support development and innovation. The region has a weak private sector investment and entrepreneurship activity which contributes to the high unemployment rates (World Bank Report, 2016).

The MENA region is well known for its weak labour markets and high unemployment rates among the youth (25-29 years old) due to the prominence of public sector employment and the lack of a developed private sector (World Bank, 2005). According to this same report, the region has major similarities in terms of youth employment trends and low female labour contributions compared to other developing countries in the world. The dynamics of labour forces in the region can be categorized as follows: labour-importing countries are the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Countries and labour exporting are the non-GCC countries. Both groups of countries, however, share the same concerns in respect to finding jobs for their young populations. The unemployment rates in the region are among the highest in the world, estimated at 25.1% for the Middle East and 23.7% for North Africa (IFC 2013). Efforts are therefore being made to develop the small and medium enterprises (SME) sector to contribute to GDP and generate employment.
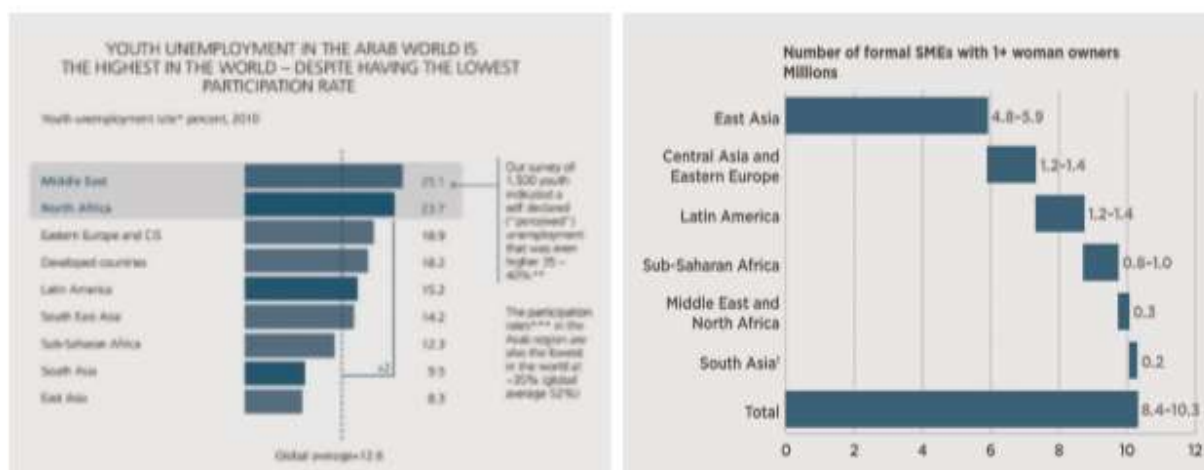
Source: IFC, Education for Employment Report; IFC, Strengthening Access to Finance for Women-Owned SMEs

Figure 3.2: Youth Unemployment and SMEs by Region

The MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region is a diverse region with great development potential. Despite the current geopolitical challenges, countries within the region have a privileged geographic location at the crossroads of Europe, Africa and Asia. The region has a young and educated population and a promising potential in sectors such as renewable energy, tourism and business development services (OECD, 2012). According to the OECD report, the MENA region has embarked on reforms to increase economic openness and to develop the private sector in order to offer better opportunities for the young generation and for women in the region. These reforms, however, have been interrupted as a result of conflict and refugee crises. The region is going through a period of transition in its politics and, most importantly, its economy in order to meet the demands of the younger unemployed generation. Specifically, job creation is the most pressing policy objective in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. With its growing population, approximately 19 million new jobs are needed in the period 2010-2020, according to the European Trend Chart on Innovation report (2005). Increased poverty and high unemployment among the 25-29 age group mean that this group comprises more than 70% of the unemployed workforce in the region. The demands for economic change will therefore transform the region and governments will not be able to meet this challenge without a strong private sector to support the economy, as pointed out by Malik and Awadallah (2013).

Entrepreneurship and the creation of small and medium sized enterprises can contribute to is job creation, revitalizing the MENA region economies. Entrepreneurship can also drive business efficiency, innovation and sustainability to solve economic problems by providing a healthy

middle class within the society. The development of a vibrant entrepreneurial environment in MENA countries will depend on the ability of aspiring entrepreneurs to identify and exploit unmet commercial opportunities through their activities and innovation. It is therefore important for different institutional entities to foster a supportive environment for entrepreneurs.

The research setting is Jordan, a developing country situated amidst this turbulent region. Addressing the country context is therefore important, not only to talk about Jordan's entrepreneurial activity but also to shed some light into the regional political instability surrounding Jordan.
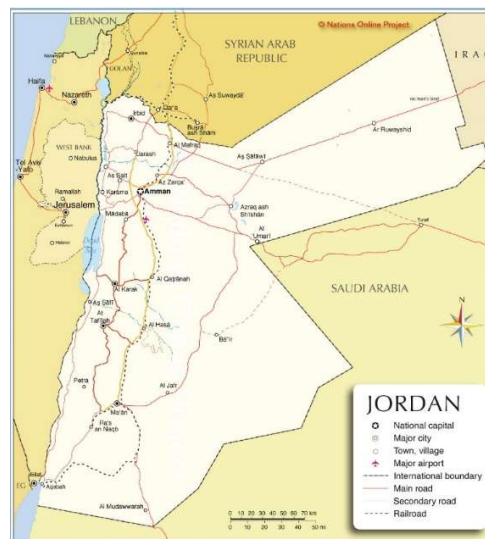
Source: www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/jordan_map.htm

Figure 3.3: Map of Jordan

Jordan shares immediate boarders with Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Palestine and Israel. All of which are witnessing political instability. The impact of the Arab Spring that affected Egypt, Syria and other countries in the region has been much stronger in Jordan than it has in the Gulf Countries. Jordan is caught between the political forces in the region arising from the political reform associated with the Arab Spring. In addition, as a result of the regional instability, Jordan has become a host to the largest refugee population in the world, mainly Palestinians, Iraqis and Syrians (World Bank 2011; UNHCR, 2013). The impact of the ongoing conflict in Syria is witnessed in different ways. Although the Jordanian economy has remained relatively stable after the conflict in Syria, the closure of the border with Syria has affected the transit trade to Turkey, Lebanon and Europe. The closure of trade routes through Syria has increased

transport costs as a result of using alternative routes. This has affected the export price competitiveness. The Syrian refugee inflow has also introduced competition over jobs in the informal sector in Jordan, although the private sector and public sector have strict regulations. Nonetheless increased competition over employment is evident (World Bank, 2013).

2.4.1 Entrepreneurship in Jordan

Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) Reports began to study differences in entrepreneurial activities between countries in 1997, and over time these reports have confirmed that there are significant differences between countries in terms of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial activities, especially between developing countries and developed ones (Bosma, Wennekers and Amoros, 2012).

A growth in entrepreneurial activity in Jordan has been noticeable in the past few years, and several NGOs are working to encourage and support entrepreneurs. Although the last GEM report about entrepreneurship in Jordan was conducted in 2009, since then the entrepreneurial activity in Jordan has increased. The increase was noticeable, new business incubators have been established, more training programmes have been introduced such as UNCATD, more NGOs emerged such as, Endeavour, Mowgli and the Business Development Centre (BDC).

According to the 2009 GEM report, the culture in Jordan is relatively positive and supportive of the entrepreneurial activity; the only hindrance is fear of failure (low risk taking tendencies). Entrepreneurial activity scored highest among the 25-34 age group; and 72% of early stage entrepreneurs are opportunity based enterprises; with the remaining 28% being necessity based. This indicates that opportunities are available and well realized among young people in Jordan. In addition, the informal sector is almost non-existing, which means that the institutions, regulations and systems in place are less bureaucratic, providing encouragement for entrepreneurs to operate within the formal sector. This was measured based on the number of start-ups formally registered in Jordan.

The report has identified positive indicators relating to institutional, cultural and opportunity recognition aspects. Despite these positive indicators, however, Jordan scored the lowest in respect to entrepreneurial activity in comparison to other countries in the region. The report recommended an increase in entrepreneurial education programmes, especially for young

people. From a context perspective, therefore, the opportunity recognition is considered high yet activity is low. Although recent criticism of GEM reports by Acs et al. (2010), mentioned that the report present overly positive statistics in cases where the entrepreneurial activity is modest. In addition, it became clear that the different frameworks used by different international institutions confirms that one size fits all doesn't work in developed and developing countries including the framework of GEM, World Bank Group Entrepreneurship Survey and OECD. Calling for further understanding of entrepreneurship in developing countries.

It is important to understand the context from the entrepreneurs' perspective in Jordan. Several NGOs have started to support entrepreneurial activity both in Jordan and the region. For example, the Young Entrepreneurs Association (YEA) is one of the pioneering NGOs in Jordan and internationally working at policy level changes to the entrepreneurial environment in Jordan. Wamda.com is a platform that aims at accelerating the entrepreneurship ecosystem not only in the Jordan but throughout the MENA region. Wamda focuses on community development and research providing corporate and government advisory services, working with grassroots communities through providing a knowledge platform for entrepreneurs (www.wamda.com). Endeavorjordan.org is an international organization with a mission of selecting, mentoring and accelerating high-impact entrepreneurs around the world. Endeavor provides entrepreneurs with mentorship and strategic advice to assist them to succeed. If entrepreneurs are successful they create employment opportunities and revenues leading to sustainable economic growth. In their latest study in Jordan, Endeavor find that entrepreneurs in Jordan employ 2700+ people with a financial capital of $148M. (www.endeavorjordan.org). Other organizations such as the Business Development Centre (www.bdc.org.jo) and Mowgli (www.mowgli.org.uk) are also providing training, support and research services to entrepreneurs in Jordan and the region. In addition to research and support seed investment organizations have been established, such as Oasis500 (www.Oasis500.com). Oasis500 is a leading investment company and business accelerator with a focus on technology and the creative industry, funded and supported by the Royal NGO (King Abdullah II Fund for Development). Oasis500 is also a business incubator that assists entrepreneurs to transform their ideas into scalable businesses through investment, training and follow-on funding. Oasis500 is recognized by private sector and NGOs in Jordan as one of the most influential players and partners in terms of advancing entrepreneurship in Jordan and the MENA region. This activity shows a policy level interest and support to the entrepreneurial activity in Jordan, recognising the importance of social equality by building a strong private sector to support entrepreneurs to provide employment opportunities.

Despite the current instability in the region entrepreneurs are active in Jordan. This study will look at the context from the entrepreneurs' perspective to understand the different enablers and factors affecting their activity. This will present policymakers with a tool to manipulate the contexts to influence entrepreneurial activity and performance (Audretsch et al., 2007).

2.4.2 The role of entrepreneurship in developing economies

Several claims about entrepreneurship being "an important mechanism for economic development" (Acs et al., 2008, p.219) have been reported. Others argued that the more entrepreneurial activity is created the faster the economy will grow (Baumol, 1991); but there has not been an example from the developing countries to support these claims. Although developing economies are dealing with economic transformation and growth, entrepreneurship research has still tended to focus on developed economies. This presented lack of understanding of the role of entrepreneurship in economic development in developing countries (Naude, 2010).

Entrepreneurship literature has focused mainly on the individuals, e.g. how to become an entrepreneur, who is an entrepreneur, and the growth and failure determinants of entrepreneurs but has failed to capture the implications for the broader economic context in developing countries (Audretsch et al., 2007). Although developing economies have been changing, there is still little understanding about whether and how entrepreneurship contributes to economic growth in developing economies (Autio, 2008), largely due to a lack of formal modelling of entrepreneurship in developing countries. Recent activities in the field of entrepreneurship have moved into establishing measurement tools, and away from processes and models of entrepreneurship in developed economies. Although these measures have indicated the high opportunity recognition in many developing countries, entrepreneurship activities are not contributing to the economic development (Ho and Wong 2007). The lack of understanding of the role of entrepreneurship in economic development in developing countries has caused what Naude (2010, p. 2) calls a "scholarly disconnection" eluding to the disconnect between research in developed and developing countries making the field of research incomplete. In addition, the roles played by institutions, and recognizing the type of institutions needed to support entrepreneurship, in developing economies are still unknown. The role of institutions is context-specific, however, and there is a need to understand the context related issues that can help identify them (Chang, 2007).

Furthermore, studies focusing on the relationship between entrepreneurship and economic performance have exclusively focused on developed countries (Nystrom, 2008). Further research into context-specific entrepreneurship dynamics and economic development in developing countries is needed to capture the relationship between entrepreneurship and economic development (Acs et al., 2008). In addition, entrepreneurship has been omitted from much of the mainstream economic modelling for developing countries. This has weakened the link between development and entrepreneurship, and added to the vagueness of the theoretical frameworks and models in respect to entrepreneurship and development (Autio 2008; Nystrom 2008). The issues outlined above introduces further gaps in the field of research. It is evident that further understanding of context in developing countries is needed. Further understanding of the role of entrepreneurship in driving private sector and job creation is needed. Further research to examine entrepreneurs in their own environment without using pre-defined frameworks of the developed countries is needed.

Thus, this research addresses the calls from researcher (see Audretsch, 2007; Acs et al., 2008; Levie and Autio, 2008), to understand the relationship between individuals and their context, in respect to entrepreneurial activity at the country level and to further our understanding of these context-specific relations. As a "one size fits all" approach does not work, especially in developing economies

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented the theoretical underpinning of this research. Despite the different approaches presented in research, the role of context in entrepreneurship in developing countries remains under-researched. This research will address this issue by focusing on the entrepreneurs' understanding of context in Jordan as a developing country using a phenomenographic methodology to capture the variation in entrepreneurs' understanding and experiences. The next chapter will address the methodological approaches and supports phenomenography as methodology which will guide this research.

Chapter 3 – Research Strategy and Orientation

3.0 Introduction

The rationale behind any research is to contribute to existing knowledge by filling in gaps identified in previous research (Golden-Biddle and Locke, 1997). The previous chapter presented a review of previous research perspectives regarding context in entrepreneurship, and introduced the specific field of research in Jordan. In this chapter, the previous research approaches in the field of entrepreneurship will be synthesized and then an alternative interpretive approach will be presented. Different interpretive traditions will be discussed and contrasted leading to the choice of phenomenography as the chosen methodology.

Through phenomenography, the research will capture the variation in entrepreneurs' understanding and experience of their context. By using an interpretive subjective research approach, the examined narratives can provide insights into the contexts of actors' involvement (Brown and Eisenhardt, 1997; Garud and Gehman, 2012).

3.1 Previous Methodological Approaches in Entrepreneurship Research

Previous research in the field of entrepreneurship has focused on economic aspects, in terms of understanding the activities of new venture creation, opportunity recognition, venture capital, innovative activities, value creation and growth in business (MacDougall, 1989; MacDougall and Oviatt 1997; Leitch et al., 2010; Weber and Szkudalrek, 2013). These studies, did not account for the individual perspectives (Gartner, 1988; Baron, 2002; Kuratko, 2007). To address this issue an interpretive methodology is required to account for the complexity, dynamism and contextual nature of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship is a multifaceted, complex social construct that is enacted in many different contexts by different actors (Leitch, 2010).

The issues presented in the field of entrepreneurship is the dominance of quantitative approaches. Quantitative approaches focused on asking questions like how many or how often, or seeking to determine causal relationships between variables. It is important to use qualitative methods more in the field of entrepreneurship because many of the important questions need an exploration and understanding of the central phenomenon through answering questions such as what, why or how. These types of questions answer the philosophical assumptions

originating from the understanding and explanation of a social phenomenon (Gartner and Birley, 2002; Hindle, 2004; Leitch, Hill and Harrison, 2010).

Important aspects of entrepreneurship research depend on qualitative methods to find the answers, for example in the field of network ties qualitative methods provide a process related perspective and more dynamic theories taking into consideration the important role of the environmental context (Jack and Anderson, 2002; Jack, 2005). Qualitative research studies behaviour in naturalistic settings, which helps to gain holistic insights into processes that exist within those specific settings. It provides in-depth and rich information about participants' views, and detailed information about why a phenomenon occurs. Hence the use of the qualitative methods in this study as it will help us understand "why a phenomenon occurs" (Johnson and Christensen, 2004; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004) and help in forming new theories.

Therefore, the production of rich knowledge requires researchers to adopt a variety of ontological and epistemological positions in addition to adopting theoretical traditions from both social sciences and humanities (Gephart, 2004; Easterby-Smith, Golden-Biddle and Locke, 2008). Issues in social science research have been taken further into "ontological methodology" (Law 2004, p. 154). The procedural issue is how to conduct social research well? What does it mean to investigate the understanding and experience of entrepreneurial intentions effectively? (Krueger, Reilly and Carsrud, 2000). The status of entrepreneurship is a practical discipline (Bygrave 2007) as shown by questions such as "what should entrepreneurs do?" and how can we improve their practice" (Schatzki, 2001; Gherardi, 2006). This implicates the choice of methodology given the nature of entrepreneurship (Leitch et al., 2010). Many important entrepreneurship questions can only be asked and answered using interpretive methodologies (Gartner and Birley, 2002).

3.2   Meta-theoretical perspective

The dominance of rationalist and objectivist approaches (Sullivan, 1998) in the field of entrepreneurship has limited our understanding of context, (Zahra, 2007; Venkataraman and Sarasvathy, 2008; Audretsch, Grimm and Schuetze, 2009; Drakopoulou Dodd & Hynes, 2012). The reasons for this emerge through an examination of the meta-theoretical assumptions underlying these dominant approaches to research; i.e. their ontological and epistemological assumptions. As Morgan and Smircich (1980: 491) mention "… the choice and adequacy of a

method embodies a variety of assumptions regarding the nature of knowledge and the methods through which knowledge can be obtained, as well as a set of root assumptions about the nature of the phenomena being investigated."

From a meta-theoretical perspective, it becomes apparent that most researchers operate within the rationalist research tradition (Jack et al., 2008), which is underpinned by a dualist ontology and an objectivist epistemology (Rorty, 1979; Bernstein, 1983; Sandberg, 2005). A dualistic ontology stipulates that the person and the world are externally related to each other, i.e. separate entities, while, an objectivist epistemology assumes there to be an objective and knowable reality 'out there' beyond the human mind (Sandberg, 1994). In respect to entrepreneurship research, this approach serves to de-contextualize the phenomenon (Westwood, 2004), since the assumption of a dualistic ontology separates the context into two independent entities – meaning and the use of it in activity on the one hand, and the individuals involved (i.e. the entrepreneurs) on the other (Lamb et al., 2011). The objectivistic epistemology, therefore, leads researchers to describe the activities associated with entrepreneurs as independent of the individuals who carry out the actual activities.

Consequently, this objectivist lens and dualistic orientation prescribed by the rationalist approaches has tended to constrain the research field, encouraging context to be identified and explained as a set of phenomena to be constituted by these two separate entities which are externally related to each other. In other words, as long as entrepreneurship research is examined through rationalist approaches, it is unlikely that we will be able to identify the entrepreneurs' contexts in their full diversity and influence. Recently, a growing number of scholars are calling for a shift in these attempts to explain context. These calls include engaging in interdisciplinary research using different theoretical frameworks (Anderson, Drakopoulou Dodd and Jack, 2009; Gordon, Hamilton and Jack, 2012; Leitch et al. 2012), re-considering the unit of analysis, and adopting different methodologies and methods (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000; Schatzki, 2001; Baron, 2002; Gherardi, 2006; Kuratko, 2007).

A new approach is needed to investigate how entrepreneurs understand their context, involving a framework that does not entail a dualistic ontology and an objectivist epistemology. In this regard, a constructionist, interpretive research tradition offers an alternative lens to understand that entrepreneurs are not separate from their context, as they operate within that context. More specifically, when looking through a constructionist lens, entrepreneurs are trying to make sense

of their "context" (Zahra, 2007; 2011). Context is not viewed unanimously among entrepreneurs; it is a continuing reflective set of factors that is part of their activities (Cope, 2003; Zahra, 2007; Autio et al., 2014; Zahra and Wright, 2011). Therefore, a constructionist approach can help in capturing the variation of their understanding and experiences. More precisely, from an interpretive perspective, it is the entrepreneurs' understanding of their context that forms the basis of how they carry out their activity. In other words, it seeks to understand how entrepreneurs understand and experience their context to form one reality with their world. This approach can provide a new lens to enhance our understanding of what context is from the entrepreneurs' perspective and capture the variation in the experiences among a group of entrepreneurs.

3.3   Research Approach and Philosophy

Following from the above discussion, the research philosophy in this study is constructionist interpretive one. This will help give insights into entrepreneurs' perceptions towards their environment and their experience through training programmes. The purpose of interpretive research is not to confirm or deny previous theories "but to develop bottom-up interpretive theories that are inextricably grounded in the lived-world" (Cope, 2005, p. 167). The roots of interpretive research are many, and the approaches within that tradition are varied, but the most influential approaches are the social constructionism approach (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Bourdieu, 1990). In this sense, people not only interact with their environment, they also seek to make sense of it through their interpretation of events and the meanings that they draw from it (Saunders et al., 2003). Constructionist, interpretive research therefore provides an alternative way to understand human and organizational phenomena through ontological and epistemological assumptions that are different from the positivistic/rationalistic approach (Crotty, 1998; Sandberg, 2005).

The interpretivist paradigm allows for a reciprocal relationship between the researcher thus supporting the dynamic of genuine participation towards the continuous understanding of deeper meanings (Schwandt, 2000). It is a strategy of inquiry in which researchers identify the essence of human experience regarding a certain phenomenon (Creswell, 2009), as described by entrepreneurs. The relationship between the subject and reality are interrelated, which means you cannot describe one apart from the other; they are constructed and re-constructed through on-going social exchange and interaction. It is pointless to attempt to describe an

external objective reality without the inner subjective world or private experience, as explained by Burrel and Morgan (1979; p233) "ontologically, the world constitutes a stream of consciousness; it is experiential; the subjective is the source of all objectivities"; thus implying that there is no independent objective reality to be discovered through rational, empirical or scientific method (Hammond et al., 1991; Cope, 2003;).

Empirical studies from within the interpretive research tradition assume that what we do and how we act is based on our understanding of our situation and what it means to us (Sandberg and Targama, 2007). In other words, we cannot identify and describe how a person is and how they see the world separately. Our understanding is based on our knowledge, which fits into our everyday practical activities (Seymour, 2007). This approach is therefore the best tool for this study if we are to capture the entrepreneurs' understanding and experience of their context through activity and training programmes based on their lived experiences. As described by Seymour (2007, p.144) "our orientations and interpretations in the world are already understood as happening in a world created by, and filled with other people. Our experience is always concerned with how it fits in relation to others."

3.4   Choosing an Appropriate Interpretative Methodology

As explained above, interpretive research provides for a wide variety of methodologies and methods that seek to examine the human phenomena, and to understand the individual's experiences, actions and behaviours by engaging with them. The possible methodologies are:

Ethnography: using observations and interviews the researcher studies the shared patterns of behaviours, language and action on an intact cultural group (Creswell, 2014). Ethnography, according to Patton (1990: 67), answers the question "…what is the culture of this group of people?"; from this perspective, the focus, according to Patton (1990), is on the shared and learned meaning of patterns, values, behaviours and language of a cultural group. This approach seeks to reveal meaning by investigating how people produce social reality (Flick, 1998). This is achieved by analysis of structures of meaning to produce evidence as to how reality (i.e. words and gestures) acquire meaning (Mick 1986). This suggests that members of certain cultural groups will act in the same manner based on their shared understanding of reality (Barley, 1983; Brannen, 2004).

Grounded theory: the researcher derives a general, abstract theory of a process, action or interaction using multiple stages of data collection (Corbin and Strauss, 2007). Grounded theory is a methodology that prescribes a systematic set of procedures to develop concepts and relationships inductively from data (Strauss and Corbin, 1990), and can be used within a range of widely differing research questions and theoretical perspectives (Creswell, 1998). The main inquiry for Grounded Theorists is to determine how social structures and processes influence how things are done through a set of social interactions. Grounded Theory develops an explanatory theory of basic social processes (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), which is developed by understanding the patterns and relationships between the "six Cs" of social processes (causes, contexts, contingencies, consequences, covariance and conditions) to produce a generalized substantive level of theory, (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Starks, Brown and Trinidad, 2007).

Case study: the researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case, activity or process. Cases are bounded by time and activity, collecting data using varied collection procedures over a period of time (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009, 2012). The case study, it would seem, is not necessarily a methodology of choice, but a choice of object to be studied, and is defined by an interest to learn about a specific phenomenon (Stake, 1994). Here researchers focus on the complexities connecting ordinary practice in natural settings, and the case data is not only interpreted and constructed by the researcher, but its meaning and experience may also be constructed by the reader (Eisenhardt, 1989; Stake, 1994).

Phenomenography: in this research design the researcher describes the experiences of individuals regarding a phenomenon. The description gathers the essence of the experiences of several individuals who have experienced the phenomenon. Its aim is to find and systemize forms of thoughts in respect to people's interpretations of their reality (Marton, 1981). This design has strong philosophical underpinnings and typically involves conducting interviews (Moustakas, 1994; Giorgi, 2009). Phenomenography ask questions about lived experiences, such that reality is understood through embodied experiences. It contributes to a deeper understanding of lived experiences and of "taken-for-granted" assumptions about the ways of knowing these experiences (Sokolowski, 2000).

Each one of the mentioned methodologies has distinct procedures for data collection, interpretation and theoretical development. Ethnography is concerned with cultures, reaching a conclusion that members of similar cultural groups act similarly based on their common

understanding of their reality (Boyle, 1994; Arnould, 1998; Pittigrew, 2000). Grounded Theory insists on theoretical sampling and saturation of data and theory before theory development can be reached; and with data comprising of life histories and introspection which are constructed to form a generalized theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; McKinley-Wright, 1995; Corbin, 1998). As for Case Studies, the focus is on the complexities that connect ordinary practice in a natural setting such as events and organizations, with the data being interpreted through critical event or thematic analysis (Eisenhardt, 1989; Stake, 1994). Case study and Grounded Theory seek to find generalized findings in the form of middle range theories that find common themes or events through data interpretation. Meanwhile, phenomenography builds theory based around lived experiences, the lived world is defined as the world in which people experience culture and society, are influenced by their objects, and act on them, introducing variation in individual experiences (Schutz, 1966; Goulding, 2004).

The philosophical approach and theoretical perspective of this study is interpretive; which supports my research stance from its life-world ontology and social constructionist epistemology. As such, the choice of methodology and methods is informed by, and aligned with this approach. The methodological choice is also directed by my research question: how do entrepreneurs understand and experience their context? Interpretive research not only provides a different lens from which to examine human phenomena, it also presents a variety of methodologies and methods that focus on the individual's meaning and understandings, as conveyed by the persons engaged in these activities, in this case, the entrepreneurs.

Are the above methodologies suitable to investigate the research question of how do entrepreneurs understand and experience their context? The answer to the question is yes; each of these methodologies can be suitable but the aim of this research is to capture the variation in entrepreneurs' understanding and experiences of context within one community. Although the above-mentioned interpretive approaches would describe and define how entrepreneurs understand their context, not all of them are able to capture the variation of their lived experience and the reality of the individual as they tell it. The term phenomenography means the "study or description of phenomena" (Prettit, 1969), it refers to anything that appears or presents itself (Moran, 2000). It is about bringing the "essences" of experiences (phenomena) to describe their underlying "reason" (Pivcevic, 1970). Phenomenography refers to the "description of things as one experiences them, or of one's experiences of things" (Hammond et al., 1991: p1). It is therefore the appropriate methodology for this study since the

aim is to focus on and capture entrepreneurs' own understandings and experiences of their context. Entrepreneurship research is dominated by objectivist, functionalist approaches, to be able to move beyond this paradigmatic approach, and to be able to develop new perspectives of entrepreneurship a new approach is needed (Cope, 2003), phenomenography provides that alternative.

3.5   Using Phenomenography

Phenomenography started as a research approach in the field of education with the first publication describing the approach was first introduced by Marton in the 1980s (Akerlind 2005). Marton explained phenomenography as a research method for mapping qualitatively how people experience, perceive and understand the world around them. It is an established methodology within the field of education and health sciences. While methodological critiques have become more common due to the lack of understanding of the phenomenographic approach of variation, and the lack of published discussion of phenomenogrpahic methodology (see Francis, 1996; Webb 1997), it has recently gained acceptance within management and entrepreneurship research (see Ashworth and Lucas, 2000; Barnard, McCosker and Gerber 1999; Sandberg and Targama, 2007; Schembri and Sandberg 2002).

Phenomenography is concerned with the relationship between the phenomena being investigated, in this study, the "context" and the individuals who experience or think about the phenomena, "the entrepreneurs", as different people experience and understand a certain phenomenon differently (Marton, 1995). It is usually used to try to identify the hidden meaning people develop (Weber and Szkudalrek, 2013). There are no assumptions about what is or is not real; only descriptions of phenomena and how one experiences things; "the whole point of phenomenography is that we cannot split off the subjective domain from the natural world ... Subjectivity must be understood as inextricably involved in the process of constituting objectivity" (Moran, 2000: p 15).

Researchers who have used phenomenography have highlighted two important assumptions made when using this method. First, there is a limited number of ways in which a phenomenon is experienced or thought about, therefore the collective ideas in the empirical material can be catalogued as part of the researcher's model using what is known as "categories of description". Second, no one person can explain all the aspects of the phenomenon, which means that data

obtained from one person is not sufficient, therefore data from several individuals needs to be combined to understand the different ways people perceive the researched phenomenon. This means that the more participants contribute to the dataset the more thorough is the understanding (Bowden, 1995; Sandberg 1995; Keiser, 2010,).

The focus of this study is to capture the variation in the entrepreneurs' understandings and experiences contexts. Through the application of phenomenography, this study expects to provide new insights; as described by Marton (1981, 181): "to describe the world without having learned how to see it or how the taken-for-granted world of our everyday existence is lived". It is also of importance in this study that entrepreneurs understandings are formed through their repetitive social engagement within their ecosystems and environment and how they deal with it. This orients us towards the entrepreneurs' ideas about the world and their experience of it, and we make statements about it (Marton, 1981). Phenomenography employs in depth qualitative analysis and is committed to exploring meaning and sense-making among both participant and researcher (Smith and Osborn, 2003).

Phenomenography involves small groups of participants and uses open and explorative data collection through which the researcher investigates qualitatively the different ways in which a phenomenon occurs. Statements gathered from participants form a pool of meaning about the phenomenon in question (Cope, 2004). The aim of the study is to detail the perceptions and understanding of a certain group rather than making a general claim, therefore the process of analysing the individual transcripts may take a long time (Smith and Osborn, 2003).

In this study the different understandings of context from the entrepreneurs' perspective will be collected forming a pool of meaning regarding "understanding the context". The analysis of the data collected will be an iterative, interpretive process during which the researcher will try to understand the entrepreneurs' perspective and understanding and the way they experience the "context". The approach to interpreting data will be based on the utterances of the participants based on their experience, taking into consideration any relationship between the different ways the phenomenon is being experienced.

Phenomenography makes use of a second order research perspective, i.e. the first order involves the researchers making statements about the phenomena, and the second order is making statements based on the participants' experiences of the phenomenon, trying to see the

world through the eyes of people experiencing it in (Marton, 1981). Data analysis in phenomenography involves a double-hermeneutic approach since the researcher is making sense of the entrepreneurs' personal experience, and thus is strongly connected to the hermeneutic tradition (Palmer, 1969). This involves the researcher engaging in an interpretative relationship with the transcripts to elicit the meanings of the participants' world (Smith and Osborn, 2003). Through double hermeneutic process, the researcher tries to make sense of the participants' understanding of their context using first and second order perspectives. In the first order perspective various aspects of the world are described through the categories of descriptions and from the second-order perspective the entrepreneurs' experiences of these various aspects of their world are described.

3.6   Design of the Interview Questions

To achieve the above process, the interview questions need to be designed to provide data that will establish critical variations explaining how participants understand and experience the phenomenon. The established variations will then be described as an outcome space of categories of description, in which each one of the categories will be described in terms of a structure of awareness (Cope, 2004). Then a hierarchy of understanding will be establishing by linking aspects of each category together and establishing the relations between categories (Cope, 2004).

The interview guide questions are designed for the phenomenon in question, which for this study is, the entrepreneurs' context in Jordan, based on the utterances of participants of their experiences, dimensions of variation, and values in dimensions of variations. Then, the relationship between these dimensions will be established, followed by the boundary between internal and external horizons leading to the meaning of the phenomenon inherent in the structure.

1. How do entrepreneurs understand their local context?
2. How do entrepreneurs experience the context of regional instability?
3. How context was presented in training programmes?

Understanding the relation between the entrepreneurs and their contexts and how their understandings influence their activity and the role of training programmes in shaping their understandings and experience is the focus of this study. Therefore, the choice of methodology must support these specific questions. It is also important to conduct this enquiry with the

entreprenuers and their individual experiences of their context in focus. This will achieve a description of how they understand and practice their activity within their context, what it is for them and how it influences their decision making locally and regionally. In this research, it is of particular interest also to capture the variation in experiences and understandings as previous research didn't capture the understanding within the same context. In order to achieve the variation in understanding and experiences a constructionist interpretive methodology is required to account for the multiplicity and dynamic role of context.

Therefore, phenomenography achieves these goals and it focuses on variation in understanding and captures variations among the same group of people, in this research entrepreneurs and their contexts.

3.6   Validity and Reliability in Interpretative Phenomenography

The validity of a piece of research relates to the extent to which its findings are credible and trustworthy (Booth, 1992; Burns, 1994). Several steps need to be taken to ensure the validity of the method: characteristics of participants should be stated, providing background if there is an attempt at applying the results in other contexts; the design of interview questions should be justified; steps should be taken to collect unbiased data; data analysis should be approached with an open mind rather than imposing an existing structure; the data analysis method should be described and justified; and researchers should account for the process used to control and check the interpretations made throughout the analysis process (Sandberg, 1997). Categories of description should be fully described and adequately illustrated with quotes (Booth, 1992).

Reliability in phenomenography studies is not considered to have the same sense as in other qualitative research. The reliability of qualitative research in general refers to the replicability of results, "… if another researcher repeated the research project … what is the probability that he or she would arrive at the same results" (Booth, 1992, p. 64). In phenomenographic studies, however, this would refer to replicability of the outcome space(s). Given a particular set of data, would different researchers report the same outcome space? According to the literature on phenomenography, this is not a reasonable question to ask of phenomenographic studies. Although broad methodological principles are adhered to, the open, explorative nature of data collection and the interpretative nature of data analysis mean that the particulars of the method applied by different researchers will not be the same (Booth et al., 1985).

Data analysis involves a researcher forming some relationship with the data, including the researcher's background, and making sense of the participants' lived experiences and understandings. Consequently, outcome spaces are unlikely to be replicated by different researchers; as Burns (1994) argues, if individuals experience phenomena in different ways why should different researchers investigating the phenomenon not experience the variation in a different way?. While it cannot be expected that different researchers would report the same outcome from the same data, the outcome should be described and illustrated so that the variation in the data is communicated. As Johansson, Marton and Svensson (1985, p.251) outlined "… once the discovery has been made we should be able to communicate it".

Phenomenographers have borrowed the technique of interjudge reliability from qualitative positivist research. Thus, one approach is to provide researchers outside the study with the categories of description and interview transcripts. These researchers classify the transcripts against the categories of description (Trigwell, Prosser and Taylor, 1994). Reliability of categories of description can be claimed based on the percentage agreement between all the researchers' classifications before and after consultation (Säljö, 1988). Sandberg (1997) has proposed interpretative awareness as an alternative to interjudge reliability. Interpretive awareness means "to acknowledge and explicitly deal with our subjectivity throughout the research process instead of overlooking it" (p.209). Researchers are required to be aware of their interpretations during the research process and to demonstrate how the interpretation processes have been conducted. Interjudge reliability has been renamed interjudge communicability in some phenomenographic studies (Cope, 2000). The use of interjudge reliability has been described as measuring "the communicability of categories and thus gives the researcher information that someone else can see the same differences in the material as he or she has done", as stated by Säljö (1988, p.45). This offers a more appropriate description of the process of asking other researchers to classify transcripts or quotes against an outcome space. Establishing the validity and reliability of a phenomenographic study is therefore not an easy exercise, which explains the general lack of reference to validity in previously published phenomenographic studies.

3.7 Conclusion:

This chapter has presented previous approaches to research in the field of entrepreneurship, and explored their problems and limitations. Of the various interpretive methodologies that were examined, phenomenography was selected as the appropriate methodology for this study, and the reasons for this decision were justified, specifically phenomenography's unique ability to focus on the variation in understanding and experience. Chapter 4 will now discuss the process of gathering empirical data through interviews and present the detailed strategy of how the interviews were executed and the process of data analysis.

Chapter 4 – Strategies for Collecting Empirical Data

4.0   Introduction

This chapter will explain how the method selected in the previous chapter was put into practice, how the study was conducted and how the sample was selected. In addition, it will explain the protocol of the study, including the techniques and procedures used for data collection. The different approaches by which this study can be judged will be introduced, along with how the collected empirical data was captured and confirmed.

4.1   Background of the Field

Since the start of my PhD journey I have conducted several informal interviews with different stakeholders and policymakers. This has given me a better understanding of how entrepreneurship started and developed in Jordan. Although the questions that I asked were not relevant to my research it was important to understand the background and to meet the key players in the field. When I started my research, I had already developed an understanding of the field because of my previous work experience and personal interest in entrepreneurship in Jordan. I was aware of the different activities taking place and of the different organizations involved. During my previous work experience, I had participated in policy level meetings with government officials to discuss micro-small enterprise activity in Jordan to eradicate poverty in rural areas, with a special focus on women and the youth. This gave me the advantage of knowing who's who in the field. This research was therefore not a foreign field for me, but this, paradoxically, made it more important to set aside my previous assumptions during the interviews and to give a theoretical understanding of the context within which it was conducted, and as it was understood and experienced by the entrepreneurs themselves.

This has enabled me to achieve an inductive approach towards theory building by reflecting on the phenomenography experience and understanding of the phenomenon. It was important to leave any prior knowledge and understanding out of the interview process in order to develop an authentic and holistic understanding without any previous influence or bias arising from my own views (Hah, 2010).

When I started the research journey my focus was to capture the individuals' stories, how they chose to become entrepreneurs and how they followed their dream, how the training shaped their experiences in materializing their ideas. I realised that these stories would unfold through my interpretation and will be reintroduced through this research. Through this process, new knowledge and insights will be revealed. Knowledge will be revealed through a reflective construction process through retelling the stories of the entrepreneurs, as explained by Kvale (1996:5): "we get to know other people, get to learn about their experiences … and the world they live in".

To achieve that objective, a diverse sample of participants was selected in order to capture the commonalities and differences in their understanding and experiences of context. The required diversity was achieved through finding a group of people for whom the research questions have a significant meaning (Welman and Kruger, 1999; Smith and Osborn, 2003; Flick, 2009). The sample selection process was determined based on the objective of achieving maximum variation and depth of answers to the research question (Flick, 2009).

4.1.1 Finding the right Sample for the research

I have conducted a research on who is who in the field of entrepreneurship in Jordan, based on this research Oasis500 was identified. I kept the objective of the research of capturing maximum variation in mind during the sample selection process. Oasis 500 adopts a comprehensive approach to entrepreneurship (i.e. training, investment, incubation and acceleration), and invests in start-ups that show a viable and profitable business model. The sample for this research was taken from those who received seed funding from Oasis500. Oasis500 have trained over 2,500 entrepreneurs, helped ideas turn into 130 start-ups and provided seed investment of over $8M (oasis500.com). It has a wide network of angel investors. Oasis500 started supporting technology based ideas but then expanded to support any idea that can be commercialized and can contribute to the economy and provide employment opportunities. Therefore, the entrepreneurs under their umbrella provide a wide range of start-up at different stages of their activity which makes it an ideal place to find entrepreneurs for this study. The entrepreneurs provided rich stories and experiences and they belonged to one community. Therefore, capturing the variation in their understanding fits the objective of this study. In that, they are entrepreneurs who have attended the same training, started within the same business incubator and received the seed funding for their activity.

Their circumstances seem to be similar but their understanding and experiences are different. Therefore, they provide for the perfect informants to capture the variation in understanding and experiencing context. Maximum variation is important in order to capture the participants' understandings (Flick 1998, 2009). Different definitions would emerge from the interviews as individuals explained their understanding and experiences of context. Also it is important not to overly define the sample in order not to restrict the "the development space of the theory" as expressed by Flick (1998: 65). With the objective being capturing the variation among a group of individuals, the respondents were selected to the insights they would bring in answering the research question.

Sample size: As for the number of participants, according to Flick (2009) and Kvale (1996) only as many people need to be interviewed as are able to reveal what the research needs to know. There is no right answer to the sample size in a phenomenographic approach, as pointed out by Smith and Osborn (2003). The trend, however, is to conduct the study with a small number of participants, focusing on depth of analysis rather than the breadth of the sample (Smith, 2004; Eatough and Smith, 2006a, 2006b). It was therefore considered more important to find the most appropriate informants who could provide the best information and answers for the research question (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

From a qualitative and interpretive perspective, sampling is more than simply selecting sampling frames and respondents; it has profound implications for the rest of the research process, from data collection, interpreting the data and presenting the findings (Flick, 2009). Choosing participants from a qualitative perspective (Patton, 1990), where the intent is to focus on selecting a relatively small sample of individuals who can provide rich information through an in-depth study, allows sufficient in-depth engagement and a detailed examination of similarity and difference, convergence and divergence (Smith and Osborn, 2003). I have also taken into consideration the diversity of the sample (Patton 1990), including gender diversity and diversity in terms of experience (such as the different stages of start-ups; the type of enterprise and the sector they are in). I wanted to select individuals for the insights they would bring to the research question, i.e. depth rather than breadth of sample (Flick, 2009; Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

Various researchers have addressed the issue of sample size, for example, Creswell (1998, pp. 65 & 113) recommended that "long interviews with up to 10 people" are sufficient for a

phenomenographic study. Meanwhile, Boyd (2001) considered between two and ten participants as sufficient to reach saturation. Others have suggested that there are no fixed rules for sample size in qualitative enquiries (Patton, 1990; Kvale, 1996). Smith and Osborn (2003); and Eatough and Smith (2006a, b) argued that samples as small as three, five or six can be considered as a reasonable sample size. I made my decision regarding the number of participants needed when I felt that nothing new was emerging from the interviews (Flick, 2009; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). At the end of the data collection, a total number of 15 entrepreneurs had participated with 14 having been interviewed. One did not participate in the interview process but rather answered the questions and sent them to me; since this did not conform with the research protocol, this participant with discounted from the final analysis.

I believe that the selected interviewees met the requirement of being "good informants" (Flick, 2009), in that they had the necessary knowledge and experience of the issue in discussion, they could answer the questions and they were interested in taking part in the study (Morse, 1998; Flick, 2009). The sample did not follow a priori determination, i.e. it was not determined by demographic criteria (Flick 2009), but rather achieved broad representation of the entrepreneurs as the table (4.1) shows:

Table 5.1: Summary of Participants

Number of Entrepreneurs		15
Gender	Male	10
	Female	5
Age	Range of years	28-49 years
Level of Education	High school	1
	Undergraduate	10
	Postgraduate	3
Entrepreneurs interviewed	14	
Entrepreneurs attended training	12	
Entrepreneurs dropped from sample	1	

4.4   Semi-Structured Interviews: the Research Tool

This research has focused on interviews as the main tool to capture the entrepreneurs' understanding and experience of context. The second order perspective in phenomenographic research has implications for the data collection and the analysis techniques as the aim of using a second order perspective is to shed light on the ways in which people experience the phenomenon. The most common way to achieve that is through interviews since these allow "the phenomenographer the possibility to probe the subject's understanding of one or several phenomena, by having a small number of predetermined questions which deliberately approach the phenomenon from a variety of directions and thus increase the chances of full exploration of understanding" (Booth 1992, p.56).

Researchers have identified different types of interviews, such as focused, unstructured, semi-structured, narrative and group interviews (Minichiello et al.,1995; Rubin and Rubin, 1995; Flick, 2009). For this research, I have chosen to use semi-structured interviews, focusing on capturing the definition of what is context and how it was experienced by entrepreneurs in training programmes. The definition of context was the starting point for establishing the understanding, then further probing questions were asked to capture a full understanding. The aim was to capture the variations in understanding rather than to measure the frequency of those definitions (Smith, 2003). This form of interview seemed appropriate as "…viewpoints are more likely to be expressed in a relatively openly designed interview situation than in a standardized interview or questionnaire" (Flick, 1998: 150). This form of interview was conducted by using semi-structured questions, which provided me with an opportunity to ask questions further questions about their activity as the conversation would allow. Using this approach provided the flexibility and specificity to cover all aspects of the research questions, in terms of understanding and experiencing the phenomenon. The interviews were conducted in an informal and conversational form. I started the interviews by asking what inspired the participant to become an entrepreneur? And how did the idea come about and why did you decide to pursue it?   Qualitative interviews are complicated conversational exchanges (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Lamb et al. 2011). During the interviews the goal was to capture the depth of experiences and variation of definitions to ensure the quality of content. Questions were designed to be loose so as to give the appropriate amount of openness and flexibility (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Interviews are socially and linguistically complex exchanges during which various scripts can introduce the potential for bias, or obscure what is being exchanged and the

nature of the knowledge produced (Silverman, 2006). The data revealed by respondents is therefore comprised of a variety of different meanings and scripts which the interviewer needs to be aware of. A reflexive qualitative approach to both qualitative interviewing and interpretation was therefore used; indeed, the assumptions underpinning interpretive research and phenomenography as a methodology demand a reflexive approach (Alvesson and Sköldberg,1999; Sandberg, 2005; Alvesson 2003, 2011).   In addition, participant statements were challenged to achieve deeper meaning beyond the acceptability of conversational responses. "Reflexivity aims to inspire dynamic, flexible ways of working with empirical material and to escape a simple theory/method divide" as suggested by Alvesson (2011: 111). Interpretations of the empirical material resulted from openly acknowledging the inherent uncertainty of all empirical material and knowledge claims. It was a result of using the interview material in creative ways rather than using definitive vocabulary. These practices were consciously applied to alleviate and/or minimize the shortcomings associated with qualitative interviewing.

4.5   Conducting the Interviews

Through my previous informal interviews, I identified Oasis500, the business incubator, and met with the Chief Operating Officer, who provided me with the list of entrepreneurs' names and contact information. This facilitated my access to entrepreneurs and 15 entrepreneurs were identified and contacted, according to the process set out in section 4.1. One entrepreneur answered the questions by email; since this did not fit with the semi-structured interview protocol and the quality of the answers were very brief, these responses had to be omitted from the sample, meaning that the final sample comprised 14 entrepreneurs.

Steps that I took in preparation for the interviews included the following:
- Sending out introductory emails
- Once approval was received, I would send the ethical instructions guide and the consent form, as per the university regulations, for the interviewees to read and to keep a copy for their records.
- Then place and time for each interview was set

Interview locations varied according to the participant's choice of location, which was either at their offices or at the business incubators; a couple were also conducted over Skype. I showed

flexibility in terms of time and place to accommodate their schedules. The schedule of interviews varied with some days being busier than others. On some days, I conducted as many as three interviews during one visit; each lasting for approximately an hour or more. One interview was conducted at a coffee shop at the request of the interviewee.

The following steps were followed at the start of each interview:
- At the beginning of each interview a brief introduction of my research was given including the goals and objectives
- The format of the interview was explained, i.e. I explained that this is a semi-structured interview revolving around their understanding of what local context means to them and how they experience it in training programmes.
- I went through the ethical implications with each participant to ensure that they understood the implications of their participation and that they had no questions. I also explained how to withdraw from the research if they wished to.
- Each participant was also asked to complete the necessary university consent forms (provided in the Appendices to this thesis).
- I also mentioned that the interview would be recorded, and no one objected to that.

While conducting the interviews, I explained the structure of the questions and that there are no right or wrong answers to my questions and the answers need to be from their own understanding and experience. This was important to make them more comfortable in expressing their views. Recording interviews enhances the validity of the data by enabling a full and accurate record of the interview. It also provided an opportunity for me, as interviewer, to be "…free to be an attentive and thoughtful listener" (Minichiello et al., 1995: 98), this also enabled me to probe the responses provided further if necessary. Each interview lasted between 40-80 minutes. I started each interview by asking about the type of their enterprise and the sector they were involved with, what start-up phase they considered themselves to be at. This introduction gave me more information about each enterprise and the stories behind each one. Entrepreneurs are always proud and passionate about their enterprises and I wanted to hear their story rather than reading about it on the web. These questions also provided me with a broader understanding of what drives the entrepreneurs and then guided me to their understanding of their local context (see Appendix 1: Interview Protocol). I also, kept a journal of my reflections after each interview, in which I recorded other unspoken experiences. During my interviews the principal questions were asked:

These questions helped me to get an understanding of their motivation and then it guided me in the interview (see Appendix 1: interview protocol). After these introductory questions, I asked the research principal questions for each of the participants:

1. What does local context mean to you and how do you understand it?
2. How does the regional instability affect your activity and how do you experience it?
3. Was context was presented in training, how?

These were the questions that captured the objective of the study, however other probing questions were used to capture further elaborations and meanings, these were:

- Can you tell me what do you mean?
- How does that context affect your activity?
- How do you deal with that?
- What examples used in training?

These questions addressed the core issues of the study in terms of capturing their understanding and experiences of context. Other questions were asked during the interview, but these probing questions were not uniform across all interviews, as they were developed in the context of each interview, and they provided flexibility and freedom to deepen the understanding of entrepreneurs and their experience.

I started my question asking about what context meant to the entrepreneur, to establish a communicable understanding and to capture the first hand understanding of the entrepreneurs through their definitions. Although some struggled in defining "context" and asked what did I mean? I tried not to influence the answer, and I gave example that everything happens in a context, and context mainly refers to the overall environment they operate within. So, as an entrepreneur, how do you define the context within which your activity happens? This narrowed down their focus into the aspects related to their activity as entrepreneurs. Then I tried to capture the deeper meaning by asking about their understanding and lived experience of context of regional political instability in relation to their activity. During each interview it was my intention to remain an observer in the background, so as to allow each participant to elaborate and express their understanding without interference or interruption (Minichiello et al., 1995;

Rubin and Rubin, 1995). I felt the energy of the entrepreneurs and the excitement when they talked about their ideas, dreams and aspirations. I could see the pride in their eyes when describing their journey and how they overcame the challenges to achieving their dreams. Not everyone had the same level of enthusiasm, however: some expressed discouragement and disappointment in their journey; others expressed frustration at the processes and lack of support. Still, the stories of their dreams and how they were trying to make their way in a challenging environment, the opportunities of pitching their ideas at regional and international events and conferences and winning competitions was thrilling to me as an observer.

4.6   Documenting the Interviews

To achieve the highest degree of exactness, the process of documenting interviews had three steps: recording, transcribing and constructing a new reality within the produced text (Flick, 1998). Transcription is the process of transforming recording into text that in turn provides empirical material for interpretation (Flick 1998). Each recorded interview was transcribed and simultaneously translated word by word (i.e. verbatim) to produce an exact text that was as close to a replica of what was said by each participant as possible. Some of the interviewees spoke English throughout the interview, some used both languages (Arabic and English) which required translating. The text represents the reconstruction of each participant's reality and provided access to their understanding. Further checks were conducted against the recording after completing each transcription and translation to ensure that each aspect of the interview was properly documented. The transcription process took between 5-8 hours to complete for each interview. I maintained an interview diary during the interviewing process, which complemented the background information gathered during the interviewing phase. The analysis focuses on the respondent's psychological world which can be displayed in the form of beliefs and constructs through the interviewees' answers (Smith 2007). Having a diary to document my reflections on each interview was therefore an important element of capturing the feelings and the beliefs of the participants. I also sent the transcripts to each interviewee to confirm that the text produced captured their understanding and experience as they explained it to me, which was confirmed.

4.7   The analysis process – Interpreting empirical material

The process of interpreting the interviews was 'reflexive', which is an important part of the interviewing and interpretation process.   "*Reflexivity* ... stands for conscious and consistent efforts to view the subject matter from different angles, strongly avoiding a priori privileging of a favoured one" Alvesson (2011:105). Through reflexivity the entrepreneurs' statements were probed and challenged in the interview and the interpretation processes in order to elicit deeper meaning and to move beyond superficiality of the conversation. Reflexivity during interpretation of empirical material required a rigorous iterative interplay between the different interpretations of the conversations while I bracketed my own views as a researcher to avoid any personal influence on the outcome; according to Alvesson (2003) and Sandberg (2005).

Using phenomenography requires an on-going interpretive, analytical and iterative process, alternating between "what" and "how", between the entrepreneurs understanding and experiences, furthermore, into the tools used in training that shaped their understanding. It was thorough a process of making sense of what I heard and what was said, while discerning the underlying meaning of context according to the Marton and Booth (1997) structure of awareness framework. The process was demanding and required several attempts of reading and re-reading the transcripts. It was important to take a second-order perspective during this process, and bracket away my own views and understanding so not to influence the analysis. I actually tried to understand their understanding from their own point of view by trading places with them and put myself in their world as suggested by Marton and Booth (1997).

Each interview transcript was read several times to capture the entrepreneurs' own understanding and experiences of their context and how training shaped these understanding and experiences. I was trying to be as open as possible to their descriptions and tried to elicit a meaning of what was the main understandings and grouped the participants into groups accordingly. The structure of awareness was revealed through identification of "what" and "how" for each question. Entrepreneurs were able to identify their context in relation to their activity and the issues they have encountered within their context formed their understanding and experiences. Furthermore, the role of training programmes was identified through examples and other stories from the same context further helped defining delimiting their context. The process of analysis and interpretation has introduced different categories of descriptions that formed the entrepreneurs' structure of awareness. Through this lengthy

process a hierarchy of understanding and experiences has been emerged capturing the relationships between the different meanings and introducing an insight into the entrepreneurs' own world.

The meaning of each category of description was revealed through a systematic analysis of reading and re-reading the transcripts several times and the focus was not on the statements but on the meaning in relation to the other statements and overall understanding expressed by the entrepreneurs. Despite the different aspects they identified, I focused on the statements to elicit the meanings and the contextual factors that the entrepreneurs discussed. This process was done for each transcript, I then compared their understandings of context across all transcripts and sorted them according to general contextual factors. Entrepreneurs were then sorted according to the emerging understandings of context both within each group and between groups. I further analysed the understandings in terms of how these contextual factors were delimited from processes in relation to their activity. I kept challenging the different ways the contextual factors and meanings were expressed until I felt that the final meanings were final and plausible. As the process of regrouping and reiterating the different meanings continued I also continued to rearrange and regroup the different meanings until I reached the final table of the categories of descriptions that form the entrepreneurs' structure of awareness. The tables express the meanings "what" context means and "how" the entrepreneurs delimit their understanding in relation to their activity. I further did a cross-checking to make sure that each understanding remains stable. Through the process of interpreting and analysing each group of transcripts, I reached concise and connected categories of description. This was achieved because the objective of this research is to capture the entrepreneurs' world as one. The result introduced a qualitatively different understandings and experiences of context, how it relates to their activity and the role of training in shaping their understandings and experiences.

Phenomenographic analysis is a systematic and iterative process, where the interpretation of the data collected becomes a personal experience to the researcher. The researcher assumes the role of "interpreter" in order to elicit the meaning of the entrepreneurs' stories. To capture the stories told by the entrepreneurs' and to rep-represent their understanding of their own world is not an easy task and required constant questioning and challenging of the different ways the entrepreneurs expressed their understanding.

4.8   Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the sample of participants and the detailed process followed to conduct the interviews, the interview protocol that was followed, data collection and the process of analysis. The next chapter will present the empirical analysis using a phenomenographic methodology. Specifically, it will introduce the five qualitatively different categories of description for how entrepreneurs in Jordan understand their context.

Chapter 5 – Entrepreneurs' Local Context

5.0   Introduction

In the previous chapter I explained the journey of empirical data collection and how I met with the entrepreneurs and took part of their journey as they explained it. In this chapter the analysis of the data collected will resume introducing rich chapters of empirical material. In this chapter, empirical data from the question: "How do entrepreneurs understand context?" capturing the relation between them and their world, using phenomenographic analysis. It is important to regard context in this chapter as the information available to the entrepreneur to interact with a process on a given occasion (Clark and Carlson, 1981). Context is not the passive background that a certain activity takes place against (Clarke, 2013) but rather an interactive construct and part of the entrepreneurial activity.

The outcome of the phenomenographic study of the variations in the understanding of a phenomenon is an outcome space made up of a set of categories of description of the phenomenon. These categories represent the analysis process and description of variation in group entrepreneurs and how they understand the phenomenon, i.e. context.

As explained in chapter 1 (The Outline of Research), categories of description in the outcome space are named and described. The structural aspect of each question will be introduced at the beginning of each of the following three chapters. The referential aspect involved the meaning attributed to the phenomenon through the relationship between the internal and external horizons. Each name of the category of description was given with the intention of conveying the meaning with respect to the phenomenon being understood and experienced. The description of each category exhibits the difference between each category in relation to the other. Quotes from the data pool are used to illustrate the important aspects of each category.

The outcome of the phenomenographic study introduces a set of hierarchically ordered ways of understanding and experiencing a phenomenon, which is different from the content analysis produced from other qualitative techniques, in that those produce rich descriptive outcomes that are flat in structure (Trigwell, 1994). In the next section, categories of description of the understanding of context are presented in a hierarchical structure, focusing on the variation of understanding and the ways of experiencing a phenomenon (Cope, 2004).

5.1 What does local context mean to you and how do you understand it?

This is the first empirical part of which I am trying to capture the entrepreneurs understanding of their context. Entrepreneurs in Jordan are faced with a variety of contextual factors within their local environment. Some of these factors constrain their activities and some provide opportunities. Since these factors differ from one entrepreneur to another it is important to capture entrepreneurs understanding of their local context. The relationship between their understanding provides insights into how they conduct their activity and captures their cognitive behaviours in respect to their environment based on their lived experience of their world.

The outcome space presents the aspects of variation in "what does local context mean?" and "how they understand it in relation to their activity?". The "what" and "how" aspects form the outcome space of their understanding as presented in the table below. The five categories of description are considered in detail in this chapter, including quotes from the data. The description of each category is divided into consideration of the referential and structural aspects forming their structure of awareness according to Marton and Booth (1997) framework of analysis.

Table 6.1: Outcome space of variation in understanding "Entrepreneurs' Local Context"

Level	Referential aspect (what does it mean)	Structural Aspect (How it is experienced in relation to activity)	
	Meaning	Internal Horizon	External Horizon
5.	Institutional	Identifies local context in relation to policy decisions, institutional support to entrepreneurs and the entrepreneurial activity. The relations between policy makers' decision and the overall entrepreneurial environment are clearly identified	Delimits local context to policy decisions towards entrepreneurial activity. The entrepreneurs are not part of policy makers' decision making
4.	Market	Identifies local context as the market strategies, market sector and being a local company in the market. Understanding the market strategies and its relation to product content is clearly discerned	Delimits local context to market strategies. The entrepreneurs' focus is on acquiring market share.
3.	Culture	Identifies local context in relation to product content and clients' culture. The relationship between the different aspects of product content and clients' culture are strongly discerned.	Delimits local context to its relationship with the region in terms of culture and its need of local content. The entrepreneurs' focus on clients' need and expectations.
2.	Perceptions towards Entrepreneurs	A relationship between entrepreneurs and the society	Delimits local context to relationship with entrepreneurs.
1	Assessing local context	Identifies local context as the physical place where the activity is. The relationship between physical space the role of internet. The relationships between the different aspects of physical space and technology are clearly discerned	Delimits local context to its relationship with physical space. Physical space is non-existent when using the internet. The entrepreneurs' focus is reaching clients beyond physical space.

Referential aspect: Local context is identified as place where you operate. The local context refers to the country where the entrepreneurial activity is taking place. Although with the internet the place is becoming less significant.

MI identified local context as following:

> *"So it is whatever you consider your personal locals, it is where you have your house and what you consider home, but with the internet the local context is blurry, because, as I said somebody in Ramallah can create something and it goes globally around the world."*

Structural aspect: the internal horizon of this category of description refers to the local place of your daily activity and points out the role of internet being part of the activity. The internet impacts the definition of local context that it becomes detached from the physical space.

So MI further elaborates on this:

> *"So my local context is international for me, I have been in Amman most of my business revenue comes from outside Amman and Jordan. So my context It's a tough question so I don't have a local context or one context for me."*

The relationships within and between the various aspects of the internal horizon are poorly differentiated. For example, local context was identified as the country where he lives, meanwhile with the internet the local context is blurry. Being in one place doesn't mean that the activity is being conducted in that place. The statements of MI demonstrate contradicting understanding of local context.

> *""I live between NY, Ramallah and Amman, and each one of them is my context and my local context"*

The external horizon of his category of description delimits local context to the ideas that are relevant to that place as MI explains:

> *"So your context is really about recalibrating to your reality. When I was here I had to recalibrate the local context to here and my idea and absorbed their wisdom and knowledge and learn from that and I had to take what is valid and also learn what is valid*

and what is not, and that's another thing because you can't just go with the vibe with everybody …"

Summary of Category: In summary, this category of description introduces the relation between the entrepreneur, the place where they live and the place where they carry out their activity and how the internet can influence the context. The category of description identified local context and delimited the understanding of local context to adapting the ideas to the local context and at the same time being international due to the internet.

5.1.2   Perceptions towards Entrepreneurs

Referential aspect: entrepreneurs in this category have identified local context from their own experiences with the community at large. In this category the experience was identified in terms of social perceptions toward entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs discerned their understanding of local context to families' perceptions favouring employment over being an entrepreneur. Being an employee is perceived more favourably. The context of being an entrepreneur is not favoured according as AAM explains:

"lack of respect to the others, which is one of the most things that hinder the entrepreneur, for example when I graduated from the university my parents were waiting for me to stop working at the company, which I was doing for 3 years, and start looking for a job within my field of study. For them this company that I have established doesn't have a future. This is an example of the societal values and culture that can either motivate or hinder the person."

In his statement AAM feels lack of respect to his wishes to be an entrepreneur. Entrepreneurship is not taken seriously, expressing a sense of frustration and lack of encouragement.

"I will explain to you why we train, because students graduate from university but they don't believe in doing internships. This concept is not in existence. They believe that the student once graduated they have to start working right away, earning a salary and be productive. And this is embedded in our culture, meanwhile in other countries they come all the way to Jordan to get that internship opportunity because they want to learn about the working environment in the business. This issue had made us try to find solutions, sometimes we get fresh graduates, we go to universities to raise awareness about the importance of internships."

In his statement AAM describes their role of an entrepreneur as a change agent towards social perceptions towards internships and entrepreneurship. Local context has been identified through the interactions between entrepreneurs and society. Some of these interactions have been negative and some positive. The negativity has been identified strongly at the family level as SO explains:

> "Local context, is probably feeling comfortable doing my own business. Doing business on daily basis, interactions with other people, for me local context sounds like that. As an entrepreneur it's the people that I interact on daily bases, personal and professional. Personal are always negative because as an entrepreneur I am doing something different … On the professional level when I deal with the government, they are ok … when I deal with our own community, it is booming our community, and it is a small community, everyone knows everyone. It's kind of gives me comfort to see other people … I see that there is a level of understanding and that makes me comfortable, dealing with other entrepreneurial organizations … so this is the local context and how I see it, as the people that I see and interact with on daily basis"

Furthermore, SM explains the perceptions towards entrepreneurs as employers is not favourable as well according the quote below:

> "In our business we need strong developers; we need to have a good product. Even if I offer the developers the same salary that they get at the companies they won't leave to join me because they are not sure if the start-up will succeed or not "

The challenge to attract experienced people and to compete with established companies has been identified as the local context. Employees are looking for job security and no one is willing to take a risk with a start-up. The external horizon of this category delimits the local context to the ability to attract experienced employees.

Structural Aspect: the internal horizon of this category of description represents the social perceptions towards entrepreneurs in Jordan. The external horizon delimits local context to how entrepreneurs are being perceived by family and the society, whether these experiences are positive or negative, supportive or not. Some of the entrepreneurs are being proactive in changing these perceptions.

Summary of Category: The statements have discerned local context to the societal attitudes and perceptions towards entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs delimited their understanding of local context to these perceptions.

5.1.3 Culture

Referential aspect: In this category entrepreneurs have identified their local context as the culture. Culture plays a significant role in the entrepreneurial activity in middle east. This category goes beyond the local context into the region as the region share the same cultural values. Culture plays an important role in terms of the product, client expectations, also perceptions of local entrepreneurs. Although the entrepreneurs use "local" in their definitions of local context but in this category, it addresses the region. The quotes below explain the various aspects of this category of description.

Structural aspect: the aspects of local context making up the internal horizon of this category of description are local content, the team, the mentality, clients' need, the image and the brand of the company, the social and religious values locally and regionally. Local context is discerned in relation to the region, the needs and expectations of the clients. The relationship between the clients' expectation and the product context is very deep and strongly identified. The expectations are determined in relation to being local from the region and understanding the culture of the region and the clients' expectation who are from the region. Local context is therefore identified as the culture of the region and its influence on the company, the team and the product content.

The following quote illustrates these relationships. JSH identified local context as following,

> "*Local context is everything we start from the fact that the region is unique and the region wants to consume local content. So anything that is not local unless necessary then it will not be consumed.*"

In his statement JSH understands local context from a regional perspective in relation to product content and the regional need of local content.

> '*for me context means the content that we provide, the team that we work with and the mentality that we deal with and so on. All of these things come together, when I say that they don't prefer to consume content that is not regional, it falls into the point of context.*'

Further he implies that aspects of local context as mentality, i.e. culture and social aspects. The mentality of the team and the mentality of the customers relates to the culture of the region. Therefore, identifying local context from a regional perspective.

> *"We understand many of these things and we work with so that's one part. The things that are liked by the region and what is not liked by the region, the things that we say, the brand that we represent and the image that we emit has to be in line with the what's happening in region because the clients are from the region and the market is in the region. And at the same time we thrive on it, why we thrive on it? Because one of our major competencies is like is one of our major edges is we know what people like and people don't like, we don't build all these hypotheses if it doesn't work, we just know because we are there."*

Going deeper in the explanation of local context, JSH also describe the different aspects and the different relationships between them. Building on the culture and the content that they present it affects the image of the company. Understanding the culture is their competitive edge as they provide the content that is relevant to the market. That is the local context that he operates within because he is from the region.

The external horizon of this category of description delimits local context to the cultural values of the region and understanding clients' needs from that perspective. Further AAM identified local context as following:

> *"On the other hand, the content, sometimes we do religious content and we notice that there is a big difference when we want to produce something for the Saudi market for example as a 3D animation for Saudi or other Gulf countries, we were forbidden from some things in our productions such as certain characters or even a female character or even adding music to the content. We believe that these values that are in today's market hold the creative people back and really hold them back."*

This quote confirms the role of culture in product content. Entrepreneurs must be sensitive to the culture and targeted market which can have an impact of the creative work that they do. The relationship discerned local context from a regional perspective as the shared cultural values.

Relationship with previous category: in comparison with the two pervious categories of description, local context is logically inclusive of the first two categories and is more complex

and advanced. Entrepreneurs started their understanding of their local context in relation to the place where they operate within. Then in relation to the societal perceptions of their role as entrepreneurs. Further into the regional and local culture and how it impacts their activity.

The internal horizon of this category of description contains additional aspects of how entrepreneurs understand their local context in comparison to the previous categories and implies a more complex way of their understanding and the definition becomes regional.

Summary of Category: in summary, the third category of description describes local context from a wider perspective into the regional culture. This category of description presents a more complex relation between the entrepreneurs and their context than the previous categories. The role of culture introduced a broader aspect of context into the region. The nature of local context identified and the relationship between the various aspects within this category are strongly discerned.

5.1.4   Market

Referential aspect: in this category entrepreneurs have identified local context as the targeted market and their strategies to access it.

Structural aspect: the internal horizon of this category of description identified the different aspects of the market, including strategies, challenges and perceptions of local product. Entrepreneurs have discerned the different aspects of the market in this category as the quote from SQ explains:

> *"Local context means to me the market that I want to deal with. I am dealing with the banking sector, so I need to see the local banks and see if they are willing, maybe for now, maybe later I will expand the scope of our market, which now has shrunk to be only Jordan, before it was more."*

The local context in this statement was identified as the market and the sector within that market.   This represents the external boundary of the phenomenon. In the next statement SQ elaborates on the idea and presents the different aspects related to the local context as follows:

> *"The local market and currently the banks, it is not easy to deal with the local market because they look at you as a local company. Even when we do consulting in addition to the solution … when I tell a client that I am willing to provide you with the solution, with*

*best practices and consultation, they look at me "you are local" which affects our
pricing."*

This category relates to the perceptions towards entrepreneurs but from the market perspective. Clients expect that local product should be cheaper and they use this strategy to drive down the pricing. This is also experienced by SM as follows:

"Local context in general means to me, that I am in a green (new in the market) with new product that's Ok, but people will not buy from me because I am still small (player in the market). So I will have to work on other plans such as giving them the product for free to try for a year or so."

Entrepreneurs have identified local context as market perceptions towards the entrepreneurs in the above two statements. In the next statement SM elaborates on the idea and it presented the different aspects related to the phenomenon as a whole:

"In addition, in general the market that we have here is not designed for growth, why? Because the entities that will buy my product, and for me these entities are the universities that are here but the competitors are coming from the US so who am I challenging, in the view of the universities? ... I am the only one in the market that provides this product and services, other companies are coming from outside the country, yet at the same time I am unable to find a break in the market in a strong way to challenge those companies ... so when I hear local context, that is what I understand, the local market."

Further aspects of this category in relation to the market is the competition and the ability for local enterprises to find market break and entry points. The aspects of local context implied by SM have presented challenges in addressing the targeted market and to think of strategies to overcome these challenges as he further explains:

"That doesn't mean that the market is small, no the market is big and the market around the MENA is worth 5Million for the learning management systems but how strong do I have to be to get into that market? Even if I present something new, they will not trust me unless they try the product for the first and second year and a third year and someone from another university would come and say that they have tried my system, and then they will trust me."

From another perspective local context is identified as market positioning, as IO has explained:

"Context in terms of where something fits within a certain context. For example, if you asked me what a certain word would mean in a certain context? In terms of my business it is how to position myself within a specific entry point within the region or the market."

The local context in this statement has been defined the positioning of entity within the market. This represents the external boundary of the phenomenon. In this statement also, we can see the marketing strategies used as an entry point within the region. Also looking at the market not from a local perspective but regionally. In the next statement IO elaborates on the idea:

"it is the content of your business in relation to the market that you are looking for or the market that you want to enter. We are an online business for example, so anything related to the technology related to the news can impact the content of my business and the context of my business from that aspect. Anything in terms of news that is happening around the world, as I mentioned, it can also change the context of my work whether it is good news or bad news. For example, I might be focusing on entertainment news, and suddenly some major event happens in the region it will change my positioning and make me change my focus to that news on that day."

The external horizon of this category of description delimits the understanding of local context to the market and the strategies used by entrepreneurs to enter these markets, how to deal with competition and market perceptions towards their products and services.

Relationship with previous category: This category of description is more complex than pervious categories on the basis that it touches on their core function and activity. It relates to the markets and the challenges they face in terms of competition and perceptions. Previous categories addressed societal and cultural aspects. This category further builds on the perceptions and challenges faces the entrepreneurs in the local and regional markets.

Summary of Category: in summary this category of description defines local context in relation to market, the challenges faced and strategies used by the entrepreneurs. The external horizon of this category delimits local context to local and regional markets. This category logically builds on the previous categories in terms of the its relation to the entrepreneurial activity.

5.1.5 Institutional Factors

Referential aspect: Entrepreneurs in this category identified local context in terms of the institutional environment in Jordan. This includes regulations, laws, policies, investment, local market readiness for entrepreneurial activity. This category explains all aspects of the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Jordan as AS explains:

> "As everybody knows in the last five years, entrepreneurship is one of the top topics on the table at the official side and at the private sector side because of many reasons, the unemployment, the economic growth and the reaction to the Arab spring. [It is used] to give some freedom and some space for young people to innovate and to implement and dream of their future. So my understanding of the context in Jordan that, it was overrated at the beginning and it was tackled without a proper plan that is normalized across all stakeholders. They didn't take into consideration the reality of our local context here, in terms of market size, appetite for investment, or how ready our country is to deal with such transactions, for a company to start small then get sold by hundreds of times fold of its assets. These concepts in our regulations in our country are not there, so we were oversold the idea of entrepreneurship, it wasn't really relevant to our context at that time."

Structural aspect: the internal horizon of this category of description addressed the following aspects: policies, laws and regulations; market size, investments, entrepreneurship to address unemployment and economic growth. At the policy level, entrepreneurship is used to reduce the impact of the Arab spring locally, by encouraging people especially the youth, to start their own businesses. The aspects of local context as implied by AS have presented weaker relationships between the entrepreneurial activity and the institutional ability and readiness. Despite the disconnections, the awareness and encouragement to become an entrepreneur has been effective in creating change in thinking and established a community of entrepreneurs.

The following quotes explain these aspects further. MSH explain his understanding of local context as following:

> "not only the people it's the process more than the people. Because if you have a stable process you will only bring qualified people everything will go smooth. People will bring the knowledge and the knowhow, and make the actual progress. Our problem is with the process itself, the infrastructure. We have so much energy, all the entrepreneurs

have a lot of energy but there are a lot of processes and people who shut you down. So unless you have a long breath, you will not succeed. So when you ask me what is the local context, I would say process and the people. But process more than the people … here locally it is the process, and it is not very supportive to be honest."

In this quote MSH further emphasise the challenges in the process and its ability to accommodate the entrepreneurs needs. Furthermore, MI explains the processes within the local context as following:

"because local context is very layered … it is not easy being in a local context. But when you are outside its different, for example it took me forever to open a bank account, literally forever to the point where I was at lose, I couldn't imagine the silliness and the unnecessary questions and customer services it was extremely frustrating and time draining need not to say any more. So in terms of that local context, I don't know how to deal with that local context."

EH has identified local context as following:

"Jordan is becoming amazing in terms of the culture was ten years ago it was crazy for someone to leave full time job to start their own business, currently it's not. we are getting support from big corporates … if you ask me about raising funds and investment, I would say negative. But if you asked me about support in terms of believers, it's positive."

In this quote EH confirms that overall encouragement of becoming an entrepreneur, also she confirms that the investment in the entrepreneurial activity is weak. Furthermore, MKH also raises the same issues in terms of lack of IP laws to protect creative work and legal requirements to start a business in Jordan are not entrepreneurial friendly:

"So the local context means accessing talent and monetizing that talent in the current local context have lots of issues especially in relation to copyrights in Jordan. Creative industry is a different market and people still don't believe that it can be income generating."

WAD identified local context as follows:

"Local context means to me what is the current situation in the country from environment around us, local suppliers, government regulations, competition, etc."

In this statement also, WAD refers to the overall environment of the business including the suppliers, competition and regulations. For ZB local context is being part of the business incubator. This has given him a sense of belonging and a community to be part of as he explains:

> "For me as an entrepreneur it means the ecosystem that I am having here, the ecosystem the interaction with other start-ups."

Relationship with previous categories: this category of description is logically inclusive of and more complex than the previous categories. The internal horizon of understanding local context has more aspects which presents more awareness of the entrepreneurial environment including policies, regulations, laws, processes, funding opportunities and the creation of entrepreneurial community. The external horizon is different from the previous categories as its boundary delimits local context as the environment that the entrepreneurial activity takes place within and the policy level encouragement to entrepreneurship to limit the impact of the regional events of the Arab Spring.

Summary of Category: in summary this category of description understands local context as the overall environment which the entrepreneurial activity takes place within, and different aspects that immediately affect the activity. This category logically progresses towards the broader understanding of context. The external horizon of this category of description delimits local context to the entrepreneurial environment.

5.2   Summary and significance

In this section I will present the variation in entrepreneurs understanding of their local context and the relations between each understanding, as stipulated in the methodological framework. These understandings present the entrepreneurs experience and awareness of context and introduces their experiential descriptions (Marton and Booth, 1997; Sjostrom and Dahlgren 2002). The entrepreneurs' utterance has defined context in Jordan through five qualitatively different categories of description. These categories have captured their story telling and their understanding of local context. The first category **Assessing local context** addresses the different countries and contexts the entrepreneur lives and operates within. Entrepreneurs contextualise their activity in relation to the environmental needs and the place that the operate within. The identify what opportunities are available in each context and how they can exploit

them. The second category **Perceptions towards entrepreneurs** addresses the society's perception of entrepreneurs. The societal perception toward entrepreneurs is not favourable either as a career or as employers. Entrepreneurs in this category are proactive and working towards changing these perceptions by introducing internships and being more proactive. Entrepreneurs contextualise their activity through being change agents to change perceptions. The third category, **Culture,** and its role in the entrepreneurial activity. Entrepreneurs contextualised their activity in terms of the role that culture plays in product design and content. Also in terms of the clients' perceptions towards the entrepreneurs from the same culture and their expectations of their products. Culture plays an influencing role between the local and regional contexts as the region shares the same cultural and religious values. Culture considered a competitive advantage for the entrepreneur being from the region and understands the culture. The fourth category is the **Market**, understanding market needs and strategies used by entrepreneurs to establish trust in their products relates to societal perceptions of the entrepreneurs in Jordan. The fifth and last category, addresses the **Institutional Factors** in Jordan and how ready it is for the entrepreneurial activity. Entrepreneurship was introduced as a preventative measure to reduce the regional instability, this was identified by the entrepreneurs. Yet policy makers didn't take into consideration the entrepreneurs institutional needs and market readiness in terms of local products and investment. This was evident in the entrepreneurs' experiences and understanding of their local context. Through these five categories, entrepreneurs are trying to understand their world, and how they can operate within that world, and how to contextualise their activity within these factors.

5.3   Summarizing the collective behaviours and characteristics emerging from local context

The aim of this chapter is to capture the variation in the entrepreneurs' understanding of their local context. This chapter has emphasised the impact of cultural and institutional factors on their activity, demonstrating how entrepreneurs perceive constraints and adopt behaviours that validate their intentions and abilities to carry out their activity (Xheneti and Bartlett, 2012). The collective behaviours and characteristics emerging from the entrepreneurs in this section, demonstrate their understanding within the identified local context. In addition to their ability to challenge the identified aspects of their local context, most of the entrepreneurs have shown confidence in dealing with their identified local context by influencing functions and circumstances. From an individual perspective, the entrepreneurs have demonstrated their

ability to influence and have direct control over their social conditions and institutional practices that affect them (Bandura, 2002).

Despite the challenges, this group of entrepreneurs have introduced solutions. This is rooted in their belief that they have the power to produce desired effects by their actions. Understanding market needs and capitalizing on being an entrepreneur who understands the local mind-set and expectations of products. In this setting, culture presents opportunities for entrepreneurs, representing equality between the collective culture of the clients in the region. However, entrepreneurs also feel the limitations caused by the clients on their creativity, asserting the "dark side of culture" (Welter, 2011). Their ability to find their market break challenging and the way they expressed it as being "small player", "new player" and "local", thus shifting their focus into local clients until they gain clients' trust and market share. The challenges facing entrepreneurs from institutions, policies and regulations. Entrepreneurs feel that they need to champion the change and be part of the policy level decisions. Different groups of entrepreneurs have identified different aspects as part of their activities, making these parts of the story and introducing unique meaning to the events and issues they have identified (see Zahra et al., 2014).

5.4   Conclusion

By using phenomenography it has been possible to introduce the variation in the entrepreneurs' understanding and experiences of their local context. These categories have identified different aspects of context that extended our understanding of previously identified contextual factors and their impact on the entrepreneurial activity. In this chapter I have introduced the five categories of description through which entrepreneurs defined their local context. In the next chapter, I will present the entrepreneurs experience of the context of regional political instability.

Chapter 6 – The Context of Regional Political Instability

6.0   Introduction

The previous chapter introduced the entrepreneurs' understanding of local context using phenomenography, and introduced five qualitatively different categories of understanding capturing the variation in the entrepreneurs' understanding of their local context.

This chapter will present how do entrepreneurs experience the context of regional political instability. I further interpret and present the empirical material by introducing the entrepreneurs' structure of awareness by capturing what abilities they show and how they operate within the regional context of instability.

6.1   Context of Regional Political Instability

The regional location of Jordan and the current regional instability cannot go unnoticed in this study. In the MENA region, instability has been seen as the result of social inequality, as Koltai (2016) expressed "Joblessness is a root cause of the global unrest threatening international security. Fostering entrepreneurship is the remedy". Jordan adopted entrepreneurship at the policy level as a defence mechanism against the regional political instability caused by the Arab Spring and to address the high unemployment figures among the youth. The question for this chapter is, "How do entrepreneurs' experience the context of regional political instability?"

Five qualitatively different categories of description in respect the entrepreneurs' experiences are introduced here. The higher categories present more complex and inclusive aspects than the lower ones in the table. The lower categories are less complex and less inclusive. Each category is described in terms of the aspects of internal horizon and the relationships between these aspects. The external horizon delimits the context of regional instability in relation to the entrepreneurial activity.

Table 7.1: The outcome space of entrepreneurs' experience of context of regional political instability

Level	Referential aspect (what does it mean)	Structural aspect (How it is experienced in relation to their activity)	
	Meaning	Internal Horizon:	External Horizon
5.	**Attracting Investors**	In terms of attracting investment or long term contracts. The experience of regional instability presented a challenge in attracting funding.	Delimits the lack of investment to being part of the region and surrounded by instability.
4.	**Access to Suppliers**	The experience of regional instability presented a challenge in accessing suppliers.	Delimits the experience of regional instability to access to suppliers. The operations are not stopped
3.	**Local Opportunities**	As result of regional instability, new clients, new resources and market segments were introduced within the local market presenting opportunity.	Delimits the experience of regional instability to introducing new markets, opportunities and access to resources.
2.	**Access to Regional Markets**	As result of regional instability, opportunities were lost presenting a challenge to the entrepreneurs.	Delimits the experience of regional instability on targeted markets and clients. The operations are not affected.
1.	**Assessing Regional Events**	The regional political instability is experienced as feeling of fear due to the events and being part of unstable region	Delimits the experience of regional instability to personal fear for oneself. The operations are not affected.

Entrepreneurs have shared their experience of how they experience of the context of regional political instability through the following categories:

6.1.1   Assessing Regional Events

Referential aspect: In this category, entrepreneurs' experience of regional political instability is presented by assessing and understanding the regional events. This has presented a fear for personal safety, but the entrepreneurial activity is not affected, as expressed by SO:

> *"If something as dangerous as what's happening around, I might be actually thinking of just picking up and leave …the main danger right now is me staying here and feeling secure as an entrepreneur."*

The relationship between the activity, market and clients was poorly differentiated. The external horizon delimits the impact of regional political instability to a personal feeling of fear.

> *"Here in Jordan it is safe and you are free to do anything, free of trade, but such danger, psychological danger is always there in the back of my mind and I might just leave the country if it becomes more."*

In summary, this category of description presents the personal aspect of the context of regional instability. In terms of entrepreneurial activity, the operations are not affected.

6.1.2   Access to Regional Markets

Referential aspect*:* entrepreneurs experience context of regional instability was experienced in terms of the entrepreneurs' ability to access markets and exploit opportunities in the region. The instability has affected their targeted markets. In the current situation, the markets in Syria, Iraq and Libya are not accessible, as expressed by SQ:

> *"If I started 4 years ago, Syria would be our targeted market after Jordan … In the current situation, we can't communicate with them, it is not like what it was 4-5 years*

ago. Iraq, Syria, Libya, even Sudan, they all bought solutions from Jordan … currently I am working with Jordan as my primary market"

Structural aspect: The internal horizon of this category presents the entrepreneurs' experience of limited access to regional markets as a result of the instability. Accordingly, entrepreneurs have changed their market strategy and reversed their international aspirations. This change in market focus from international to local is due not only to instability, but also due to competition in other countries like the Gulf as SQ explains:

"Currently I am working with Jordan as my primary market, let me tell you why: In the Gulf region they are willing to pay for international companies to get such solutions; they have high purchasing power and their banking sector is huge and they can also afford, so I can't compete. So, my focus is Jordan, I previously was looking for Syria, Iraq and Libya but not any more in the current situation, but hopefully when things calm down."

The quote explains that not all markets are willing to buy the product offered especially in high purchasing power economies, such as the Gulf countries. The Gulf countries prefer to deal with international companies. Other countries would have supported the local entrepreneurs' products, but because of the political instability entrepreneurs shifted their focus to the local market. This feeling was also shared by SM:

"We had a target market around 150 universities in the Middle East region, we lost around 70 or 80 universities from that because we can't communicate with them because they are universities in Syria or Iraq."

The external horizon of this category delimits entrepreneurs' experience of regional instability to the lost opportunities in the turbulent countries, with a consequent focus on the local market as a result. The entrepreneurs in this category are at the early stage of their start-up. They feel that operating in the current regional instability has limited their access to their targeted market, hence their sense of lost opportunities. Their activity has been reversed from being regional to local. The following quotes from SM explain this:

"… now our work is not a priority for them. Their priorities are not the e-learning system but rather the security of students and the continuity of the education … thus we had to put this market on hold."

This category relates to the previous one in terms of security and fear, although in this category it is presented from the clients' perspective. For other entrepreneurs the instability has introduced a demand for other types of business. This is explained by IO:

"For me personally in the field of my business, as I am in news oriented business, for me it doesn't impact me. On the contrary and, unfortunately, if the news is good or bad I benefit from both scenarios, as I need the images from both sides to sell to news outlets."

The relationships within and between the various aspects of the internal horizon present both challenges and opportunities based on the type of the entrepreneurial activity. The regional political instability has changed the clients' perspective for one product but increased demand for another, i.e. introducing new markets while closing other markets.

Further aspects of how entrepreneurs experience the context of the region include postponing expansion plans in neighbouring countries, as quoted by WAD:

"In terms of our expansion plans, we had a plan to expand in Erbil in Iraq but since rise of ISIS in Iraq we had to put our plans on hold. That got us to start thinking more about the Gulf region; although we wanted to start the expansion in the Gulf when we are more solid, our original plan was to expand into the Gulf region after establishing our presence in Syria, Iraq and Jordan first because they require more parts."

JSH also talks about abandoning one of the targeted markets for his business:

"Iraq is a big market but it is hardly accessible now. That's basically abandoned"

The external horizon of this category delimits the entrepreneurial experience of regional political instability to understanding the challenges presented in the regional markets. The internal horizon in this category discerns the entrepreneurs' awareness and ability to adapt to

challenges. Although this situation has affected their strategic approaches to markets in terms of shifting from going international to focusing on the local market.

In summary, this category of description features a more complex understanding of how entrepreneurs operate within the context of regional instability from the previous one. The aspects identified in this category addressed the market, clients' priorities and the market strategies adopted by entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs have experienced the context of regional instability in terms of limited access to some markets, such as Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Sudan. The result was to focus on local markets. Some entrepreneurs felt that they cannot compete in the Gulf region because of clients' purchasing power and preference for dealing with international companies. Others thought of the Gulf region as the next market to introduce their services and products. Some felt that the instability created a demand and provided an opportunity for their products. Entrepreneurs have experience the context of regional political instability in different ways depending on the type of sector and business they are in. Despite all the challenges, their activities continued and so did the operations.

6.1.3   Focus on Local Markets

Referential aspect: This category the entrepreneurs experience the regional political instability as positive, in terms of providing clients, increasing the talent pool and thus enabling market expansion. This was explained by WAD:

> *"The current migration into Jordan has increased the numbers of cars in the city. These cars need new parts and accessories whether the cars are coming from Syria or Iraq, this has expanded our market."*

Structural aspect: the internal horizon of this category of description introduced the following aspects in terms of the entrepreneurs' activity: the clients, market and resources. The relationships between the different aspects are very evident as they relate to the entrepreneurs' experience of regional instability. The following quote from JSH explains the increased talent in Jordan:

> *"Its (the instability) impacting the market, it's not impacting the operations, them having problems means supplying the Jordan market with more talent, so increasing the talent pool ... So basically, it's more access to talent but less access to market."*

Also, ZB confirms that the talent pool in Jordan has increased because of the instability:

> *"access to human resources from these countries, Syrian people are good in terms of technical skills and content writing skills"*

The regional political instability has an impact on access to clients and e-commerce, as explained by AS:

> *"The instability in the countries close to Jordan also affected us in terms of access to resources, in addition to access to clients and customers as well. The penetration of the internet and online payment has affected us and I believe that the instability is playing a strong and big part in the latency of the penetration of internet and online payment in the region."*

Regional instability has reduced competition, as explained by AAM:

> *"The first impact was in terms of competition. In a way, our main competitors are, first in Syria and second in Egypt. Unfortunately, we can say that the impact is positive: it shifted the focus to Jordan"*

The external horizon of this category of description delimits the entrepreneurs' experience to: increased talent because of the influx of immigrants, a change in the competition and increase in market demand. From the entrepreneurs' perspective, although the instability limited access to regional markets, it opened new opportunities locally.

Relationship with previous categories: The relationship between this category and previous categories presents the entrepreneurs' experience of the context of instability. This includes, changes in market focus and market strategies, further the instability introduced new opportunities and new talent in local market, furthermore, the loss of regional competition. The aspects are closely interrelated to the core entrepreneurial activity.

In summary, this category has introduced the different experiences of the entrepreneurs within the context of regional political instability. Overall, the entrepreneurs have identified positive aspects to the instability and to their activity. Although they have also been challenged by losing access to markets, the entrepreneurial activity and operations have been able to continue.

6.1.4 Access to Suppliers

Referential aspect: in this category entrepreneurs have experienced the regional political instability through the limited access suppliers, as the following quote from SO explains:

> *"So basically it affected us: Syria is closed now, as a result we can't get things from Turkey because of the route through Syria."*

Structural aspect: the internal horizon of this category of description delimits the entrepreneurial experience to a limited access to suppliers within the region. Each one of these categories represents a different aspect of the activity. As explained by MKH:

> *"When I printed the first book I did the printing in Lebanon and they are usually shipped by land through Syria but we were faced with a month delay from the delivery date because of the conflict in Syria. It was a security matter for the driver and it was risky to get the shipment."*

The first two quotes reveal the challenge facing entrepreneurs in accessing suppliers due to the conflict in Syria. This has cut off the land shipment routes to other countries such as Lebanon and Turkey. On the other hand, this also provided an opportunity, as explained by SO:

> *"But on the other hand, it might be bad for other people but it was good for us. People started buying from us threads they order online and they get it delivered to their homes, so we grew up to 1 million users online."*

In summary, this category of description presents the experience of context of regional political instability in terms of access to suppliers and the safety of providers. This category builds on previous categories by furthering the entrepreneurial experience within the context. The

external horizon of this category of description delimits the context of regional political instability to access to suppliers through available routes.

6.1.5 Attracting investors

Referential aspect: in this category of description entrepreneurs experience regional political instability in terms of their ability to attract investment and getting long-term projects and contracts. Being part of the region has increased the challenges in that respect. The quote from AS explains:

> *"The investment and fund reach. Because all investors are very hesitant to invest in risky start-ups or businesses"*

Not only investment but the ability to start and commit to long-term projects has also been affected by the instability, change as explained by AAM:

> *"The fear of starting long term projects because animation takes a long time: from one year or one year and a half. There is fear of starting these types of projects because no one can know how stable the country will be."*

In an international context the ideas of Jordanian entrepreneurs are appealing to investors but when they know which part of the world the investment is going to, they hesitate, as explained by ZB:

> *"People get excited about the idea and they are willing to invest: we are not at the getting their attention phase anymore. Once we started talking serious, once they know where we are located, they would back up, because of the instability in the region. For them Jordan is not separate from what they see in Syria and Iraq ... Access to capital is being blocked because of the instability"*

Structural aspect: in this category the internal horizon presents the entrepreneurs experience within the context of the regional instability in terms of their ability to attract investment to their activity. Although the ideas are attractive, the fact that Jordan is situated in the midst of regional political instability makes it less attractive to investors. This aspect has been identified by the

majority of the entrepreneurs. Investors look at the region and not the country, as explained by MKH:

> *"We started to feel the impact when we started to raise funds from the US. We used to do the pitching to investors', their reaction was not supportive based on the news coming from the region and the media about the wars in the region."*

In summary, this category of description addresses the investment environment in Jordan and the impact of the regional political instability has on the country. The challenges and the attractiveness of Jordan to investors were expressed by the entrepreneurs in this category. Jordan's lack of attractiveness to investors because of its geographic location in the region. The relationship with previous categories forms a complete introduces the entrepreneurs' experiences of the context of regional instability. The context has presented challenges and opportunities to their activity. The external horizon is different from the previous category as its boundary delimits the impact to attracting investments and long-term contracts.

6.2   Summary of the entrepreneurs' collective behaviours and emerging characteristics

In this chapter entrepreneurs shared their experiences of regional political instability context. The context of instability has presented new challenges and opportunities through which entrepreneurs had to rely on their knowledge and experience to process the new events and its impact on their activity.   Their experience has been changing in a process of sense making (Cornelissen and Clarke 2010), confirming its intrinsic relation with reasoning, this was evident in the emergent categories. The context of regional political instability has shown some inconsistency with the hierarchy of entrepreneurs' experiences as they revealed opportunities and challenges.   The behaviour towards **Assessing regional events** did not affect the entrepreneurial activity in terms of operations and continuity, since the sense of insecurity did not stop entrepreneurial activity but rather the entrepreneur felt independent from what is going on in the region. The next category within the context of political instability was **Access to regional markets**, especially for the entrepreneurs who were targeting Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Libya and Sudan as their markets. In this category, entrepreneurs had to change their strategies towards other countries in the region, including the local market. **Access to suppliers** was also affected as the routes through Syria have become inaccessible due to the instability. Although entrepreneurs had to change suppliers, however, their activity continued. It

was important for the entrepreneurs to take into consideration the institutional and legal environment in the suppliers' countries. Especially IP regulations for original work were of importance. In terms of the **Focus on local market**, from the entrepreneurs' perspective the context of regional instability was positive. Although Jordan has witnessed a high influx of immigration, entrepreneurs have identified immigrants as new talent within the market, and as a source of new clients and new demand in the market. For this category, the activity was supported by talent and demand. **Attracting investors:** in this category the context of regional instability presented a challenge in terms of attracting investors and long term contracts. Despite the challenges entrepreneurs continued their operations and focus on the opportunities presented.

6.3   Summary and Significance of Findings

In this chapter, the variation in entrepreneurs' experiences of the context of regional political instability was captured through five qualitatively different categories of description, that captured the dimensions of experience through which the entrepreneurs aggregated and reasoned their activity (Jones et al. 2014). Through this process of experiencing regional instability, entrepreneurs exhibited the depth, breadth and familiarity which relates to their expertise accumulated through their experience. According to Reuber (1997) their expertise is both time and context dependent, in that, it is more context dependent rather than task specific; which is acquired through different experiences and novel situations. This has contributed to Jordan becoming an alternative provider for some services; as a result of their experience and expertise in certain fields. Their depth and breadth of experience across the countries in the region has attracted clients to Jordan. This increased their probability of survival (Mudambi and Zahra, 2007) and their new knowledge and opportunity alertness (Bingham, Eisenhardt and Furr 2007). This reflected their depth of experiential knowledge and direct involvement in the industry at the regional level and intensity of experience (Meuleman and Wright 2011).

On other hand, the entrepreneurs lost access to regional markets, there is a need to change suppliers or when investors' lack interest in the region. Despite the challenges, entrepreneurs have exhibited tenacity and persistence in continuing their operations. In addition, alternative markets and clients were identified, either by focusing on local markets or other markets in the region. For entrepreneurs in the context of instability, to be able to acquire useful knowledge of foreign business and institutional practices requires actual sustained involvement, in addition to many repetitive experiences in the field (Autio, Sapienza and Almeida, 2000).

As a general finding, entrepreneurs experience precariousness but also exhibit tenacity within the context of instability. They feel the dangers, the uncertainty, the threats, but at the same time they develop ways to cope with them by seeking opportunities elsewhere. The regional instability, although it limits their access to markets, has provided the local market in Jordan with more talent. This can resolve the challenge identified in the local context in terms of access to talent. Entrepreneurs are dealing with strategic decisions, more talent in the market, localising rather internationalising; and signing short term contracts rather long-term agreements. Although the instability has shifted the market demand to Jordan as an alternative, the sense of instability still dominates, even if operations and continuity of business is increasing. The ability to attract funding is a challenge. These abilities confirm the entrepreneurial characteristics of persistence, effectiveness and agility despite the challenges are all part of their knowledge and experience of the region.

6.4   Conclusion

Through the phenomenographic approach, variation in the entrepreneurs' experience of context of regional political instability was captured through five different but inclusive categories of description. The entrepreneurs are aware of the challenges the regional instability presents for their activity but they have demonstrated the ability to address each challenge and find alternatives to keep their activity going. The next chapter will address how training programmes have shaped the entrepreneurs' understanding and experience of their context through their activity.

Chapter 7 – The Entrepreneurs' Understanding and Experience of Context

7.0   Introduction

This chapter captures the role of training in defining and shaping the entrepreneurs' understanding of their context. It will present the aspects of the entrepreneurs' understanding through categories of description. Although this chapter is not addressing the pedagogical approaches to learning, it addresses the training role in shaping the entrepreneurs understanding. The learning experience of the phenomenon and as part of the entrepreneurs lived world that they learn about and experience.

7.1.   How did you learn about context in training?

A learning experience always involves an individual learning about something. This represents a phenomenon in the context of a phenomenographic approach on learning. The experience of learning about a phenomenon, in this study the phenomenon of context, can be analysed in terms of related "what" and "how" aspects according to Marton and Booth's (1997) model of analysis. The "what" aspect represents the learning experience of the phenomenon and the way of experiencing a phenomenon can be further described in terms of a structure of awareness consisting of internal and external horizons. The complexity refers to different aspects within the structure of awareness.

The outcome space introduced two qualitatively different categories of description of the entrepreneurs' experience of local context in training. The category at the top of the table is a more complex and the lower category is less complex. Each category is described in relation to the entrepreneurs' experience of how local context was presented in the training and how the training programmes helped shape their understanding.

Table 7.1: Outcome space of entrepreneurs' experience of context in training

Level	Referential aspect	Structural Aspect	
	Meaning	Internal Horizon	External Horizon
2	Business Skills Training	The experience of local context in training presented through business skills training.	Delimits the experience of local context to business skills training.
1	Changing Perceptions towards entrepreneurship	The experience of local context in training was through acquiring tools to deal with local context and changing perceptions	Delimits the experience of local context to dealing with local context and sharing local success stories and local people.

7.1.1 Changing perceptions towards entrepreneurship

Referential aspect: local context was learned by changing perceptions towards entrepreneurship. In this category the entrepreneurial characteristics are encouraged by focusing on self-efficacy and determination. Local examples are presented to recognize that entrepreneurship can be accomplished and success stories do exist. Different quotes articulate different aspects of this category. The participant IO explains his experience:

> "*They teach you how to be persistent, how to think outside the box, help you get over the fear of failure and that you shouldn't give up. The most important thing about failure is how to keep going on.*"

The notion underlying this category is how to pursue your idea and get over the fear of failure. Building on the idea of being persistent and overcoming the fear of rejection, explained by ZB:

> "*Open your eyes once to these opportunities. You need to put in a little effort. Sometimes you will face rejection and no one will listen to you, sometimes they would*"

In another quote, the process of changing perception takes a different route, as explained by SO:

> "*It gave me a metaphorical example of how it is the hardships and the stops and milestones that you have to achieve. It was, a kind of a tool that they gave me or a process to deal with my local context*"

The local context was presented in the form of tools to deal with real-life issues and the challenges of being an entrepreneur.

Structural aspect: the internal horizon of this category of description introduced different aspects of the experience of local context in entrepreneurship training. Those aspects are about changing perceptions. The external horizon delimits the experience of local context in training to changing perceptions towards entrepreneurship and of being an entrepreneur.

Local examples are presented through local entrepreneurs and these are also used to change perceptions towards entrepreneurship. A quote from AAM explains:

> *"The most important thing that these programmes provided was bringing people from the sector who dealt with the local context and who shared their success stories and even their failures are success. This has inspired us to keep going in the right direction."*

This encouraged and changed the perceptions of entrepreneurs in the same sector. AAM also elaborated that these programmes provided a community for entrepreneurs. Bringing people together as a support mechanism also plays a role in changing perceptions:

> *"The entrepreneurs in Jordan didn't have a community where they belong to in general. So, these training programmes and the business incubators such as Oasis 500 and Zinc provided us with a community where we can share ideas and share challenges and our dreams."*

In this category of description, the experience of local context in training programmes was realized through translating the content and adapting it to the local context, bringing local entrepreneurs to share their experiences.

The external horizon of this category of description delimits the experience of local context in training to local examples, translating of content and bringing local entrepreneurs to share their experience. It is difficult to relate to the examples, even the local ones. These aspects have different effects on the participants. Localization is a personal experience, as IO said:

> *"Localization has been mentioned a lot in the training and they talk about it many times, they bring local entrepreneurs and local success stories of other entrepreneurs in the field. But at the end of the day they give you the tools, and each person do the hard work to understand how to use them, and how to do localization for each own local context."*

The experience of localization differs from one entrepreneur to another based on their own local context as explained in the quote above.

In summary, this category of description captured the different learning experiences of local context in training. The aspects were focused on changing the entrepreneurs' perceptions toward entrepreneurship. From a practical point of view, the programmes were translated from other international programmes to make them local. In addition, localization was presented through local examples and success stories to encourage entrepreneurship.

This category introduced the process of learning about context through the following: use of local examples (i.e. entrepreneurs and adapting the stories and examples to local context); changing behaviours in terms of being persistent and identifying opportunities; business training tools and metaphoric tools to apply in everyday situations, and creating a social network of entrepreneurs. The learning experience of local context in this category articulates the collective modes of entrepreneurs as social agents irrespective of the culture in which they happen to reside. The efforts to manage their activity are part of the collective forms that they experience and that other entrepreneurs have experienced before. As pointed out by Bandura (2002, p.270) "Whatever other factors serve as guides and motivators, they are rooted in the core belief that one has the power to produce desired effects by one's actions, otherwise one has little incentive to act or to persevere in the face of difficulties". The approach to the learning experience of local context has focused on strengthening the entrepreneurs' self-efficacy through different approaches in the training programme.

Although the depth of the experience varied from one entrepreneur to another based on how they related to the examples provided the main approach was to encourage and change perceptions towards entrepreneurship.

7.1.2 Business skills training

Referential aspect: The learning experience of local context in this category is realized through developing business skills to act within the local context, focusing on understanding the market, the clients and the product. The relationship between the entrepreneur and their attitudes towards their products is strongly discerned, as explained by AMM:

> *"How to be flexible with developing your product based on the clients' requirements and not to get too attached to your product that you don't edit it."*

In addition, the training focuses on the product being high quality and on the work ethics needed to succeed, not only locally but also internationally as explained by JSH:

> *"In terms of entrepreneurs and in terms of work ethics, in terms of quality and terms of how we work, it is never bound to or for the region. If we want to success it has be world class, and world class in terms of quality and in terms of work ethics and so on."*

Also, the need to understand the dynamics of markets, as explained MKH:

> *"It was effective if they give you an idea about the market in Jordan or in other countries such as Saudi Arabia, or UAE. They give us inside tips about where the purchase power is and what products they are looking for"*

Relationship with previous category: the way local context is learned in this category builds on the previous category in a logical manner. The external boundary of this category delimits the experience of learning to understand business skills required. This category is more complex as it has more aspects related to understanding and recognising the relations with clients, markets and products.

In summary, this category of description explains the entrepreneurs' learning experience of their local context and what skills they need, i.e. clients, markets and products. This category is logically inclusive of the previous category and builds on the skills identified by the previous category. The external horizon of this category of description delimits the experience to learning about these relations.

This category has different learning aspects identified by the entrepreneurs as follows: to know the market; to find your market niche and to be flexible in adapting to the market. The skills identified build on the entrepreneurial skills in terms of understanding the market and clients' needs. In terms of the previous category of description, it relates to local examples and local success stories.

7.2   Entrepreneurs Learning Experience of Local Context

The use of phenomenography has presented the third stipulation in the theoretical model by capturing what change is implied by learning? The learning experience has revealed the hierarchical relations between different ways of experiencing a phenomenon. This has been supported by a structure of awareness as pointed out by Marton and Booth (1997). The emergent structure of awareness has introduced the complexity and inclusiveness of the experience. Phenomenography also revealed the learning experience through a limited number of qualitatively different ways of experiencing a phenomenon (Johansson, Marton & Svensson, 1995). In this research, the change implied by learning about local context in training was presented in two qualitatively different ways: changing perceptions and business skills training. These were presented in a hierarchy of levels of complexity. In the first category, entrepreneurs learning experience of local context was through success stories and other local examples. In the second construct, the learning focused on business skills and how it influences their activities. The learning experience addressed behavioural and skills training. The entrepreneurs' ability to change perceptions towards entrepreneurship was supported through the use of local success stories and listening to entrepreneurs from the field. The other approach to learning was entrepreneurs' ability to identify their markets and the strategies to get into those markets.

Marton (1988) breaks down categories of description into referential and structural aspects. Accordingly, the referential aspect relates to the intention with which the students approach learning, described as surface (reproduction of knowledge), and deep (making sense of new information). While the structural aspect can be considered as the relationship between the act of learning and the intention with which the student applies the act of learning (Marton and Booth, 1997). In the context of this study, both constructs developed in this research contribute

to the approach of learning about context in Jordan, as the focus is not learning about the phenomenon but rather experiencing the phenomenon.

Further, the quality of the entrepreneurs' learning outcome is related to the learning approach adopted. In this research, it means finding the relationships between learning approaches and learning outcomes. People bring to a learning situation a level of prior understanding (Prosser and Miller, 1989), which means the higher the understanding of the subject the deeper the learning will be. This can be demonstrated in the more complex structure of awareness, according to Booth (1997). In this study, therefore, the two constructs have demonstrated different levels of complexity in relation to the entrepreneurs' experience of context in training programmes.

7.3   The Ways of Experiencing Context in Training Programmes

To understand the experience provides a clear view of the active participations in the events that are particularly linked to the phenomenon (Csikszentmihalyi and Larson, 1996). It is important to capture the experiences since they involve the individual receiving events, in addition to reacting, reflecting and interpreting, and linking to other experiences (Bruner, Mano and Oliver, 1993). The act of experiencing is complex and takes different forms at different levels, introducing different implications for learning, behaviour and identity (Moriss et al., 2012).

The key outcome of learning is the introduction of new experiences that challenge earlier knowledge. Although learning can sometimes be inadequate for dealing with emerging developments or new situations, the experience of learning is time dependent and changes depending on events (Morris et al., 2012). Entrepreneurs learn from events as they happen, generating knowledge as a function and transforming through experiences that are continuously created (Reuber and Fischer, 1999; Politis, 2005). Learning, therefore, is tied to the nature of the events being experienced, with the greater the diversity of events the greater the learning achieved (Reuber and Fischer, 1999). The question for this empirical part was "how did you experience context in the entrepreneurial training programmes?" the selected sample of entrepreneurs are required to attend training at the beginning of their start-up phase. From a time perspective that was at the early stages before encountering real life challenges. The question addressed their experience of context in training, the answers are presented in the figure below, adapted from model of learning experience of Marton and Booth (1997).

Less complex

More complex

Changing perceptions towards entrepreneurship by using local examples

(behavioural change through training)

Inclusive of aspects in relation to activity

Business skills Training

(Activity related outcomes)

Experience 1: the first learning experience of context introduced the various examples, behaviours and events of the real-world. This way of experiencing context was focused on other entrepreneurs' success stories it did not include the business skill, but rather addressed the behaviours of the entrepreneur.

Experience 2: the second learning experience comprises the technical skills needed to identify and with local context. It introduced the business rules to manipulate the local context and how it may appear to entrepreneurs, for instance how to identify your market, clients, your product. This introduced the deep structure of this experience and it include the first experience forming a whole approach to identifying and experiencing local context, combining a larger approach.

In identifying these categories of description, Booth (1997) suggests that the "what" and "how" aspects of a learning experience about a phenomenon have educationally critical aspects. These refer to the experience of learning about a phenomenon that are educationally critical to developing the complexity of ways of experiencing a phenomenon (equivalent to depth of understanding). It should be noted, however, that in this case these were short term programmes, and therefore the experience of the phenomenon is limited to a small number of different ways of varying complexity. Generally, they are less complex and the strength of relationships between the different dimensions of variation may vary between entrepreneurs taking into consideration their prior experiences especially if they were first time entrepreneurs or serial entrepreneurs.

It is important for this chapter to capture any novel situations through which the desired way of experiencing a phenomenon takes place. There are likely to be aspects of learning in which there are differences between an effective deep approach to learning and a less effective approach. Using phenomenography has allowed for important understandings to be developed regarding how entrepreneurs experience context in training programmes. Through phenomenography, the findings demonstrated that a phenomenon can be experienced in a limited number of qualitative variants.

The two emergent categories of description have introduced two different approaches to the way entrepreneurs experience context in training. It is evident in the aspects of these categories that entrepreneurship in Jordan is influenced by a number of personal and environmental factors, including social status. Their experience as they have shared, was different from the learning experience, as the quote explains: "*There is a saying "easier said than done" you face these things, they try to help you all the business incubators they try, but still the process and environment in the country was the most challenging. I have to go through all the hurdles myself and then I will know how hard it is for me*" (MSH)
This reveals a gap between the experienced learning and the ability to deal with local context, as the challenges are much more than what is presented in training. Understanding context contribute to improving competencies such as building entrepreneurial identity, formation of entrepreneurial intentions; skills, knowledge, competitiveness and attitudes (see Matlay, 2008; Cheng et al. ,2009; Jones, 2010; Nabi and Linan, 2011; Leitch et al., 2012; Martin et al., 2013; Donnellon et al., 2014;). Still, the experience of learning about a phenomenon needs to be focused the approaches to learning associated with the development of more complex ways of

experiencing the phenomenon (Marton and Booth 1997), in order to achieve change through learning.

The different aspects of learning experience, and the relationship between the categories, might be expected to lead to the success of the learning experience and to the desired complex way of experiencing the phenomenon. The entrepreneurs have attended various short term training programmes provided by the business incubator and other NGOs. Learning about local context was experienced through business skills training, and through support in the form of examples from local entrepreneurs. In one approach the focus was on changing perceptions of the entrepreneurs towards entrepreneurship and the challenges that they might face. Focusing on the behavioural and cognitive aspects, training programmes are targeting behaviour and it is time to move away from individual measures and beyond economic factors into context specific factors (Maritz and Brown, 2012). The training programme attempted to address context specific factors by presenting success stories of the local entrepreneurs. The two categories present the variation in the learning experience of local context in training.

In summary, entrepreneurship is a social system, the focus is on people and how they interact with their context. The defining features of how entrepreneurs experienced their local context in training are: 1. A focus on entrepreneurs in the same local context, describing their behaviours towards the challenges they faced and talking about their success. 2. This supported the decision making process of becoming an entrepreneur and influenced perceptions. 3. The decision making process is supported by business skills to understand and manipulate the context of activity by strategies and business related decisions.

7.5   How context was presented in training programme?

Overall, the categories introduce two perspectives into the entrepreneurs' way of learning about context. The business incubator provides a network and a sense of community to encourage the development of entrepreneurial activity and identity, introducing local examples and success stories to emphasize self-efficacy and empower change. Yet there are challenges in respect to the social and cultural aspects of the local context. These constraints did not determine the entrepreneurs' actions, however; instead entrepreneurs tried to modify the challenges by introducing solutions. Furthermore, the institutional aspects presented in the categories are modified to accommodate the entrepreneurs' actions.

Five categories of understanding context will be presented in relation to the two categories of context in training as following:

Understanding 1: local context is understood as the place where the entrepreneurs start their activity. The understanding and experiencing of local context in this category presents the entrepreneurs' individualistic approach to identify and understand their own context and how to operate within that context. To understand your local context is to know your market and your product, and to design your idea to fit that context and validate it. This understanding was further experienced in training through business skills and local examples. Context in training is relevant in setting the scene and guide the entrepreneurs in assessing their local context.

Understandings 2 and 3: These categories address the social and cultural perceptions towards entrepreneurs. From the social perspective entrepreneurship is not perceived as the preferred status nor seen as an attractive employment option. Entrepreneurs have to deal with less experienced employees as an alternative and work hard to change perceptions towards them. These categories have an impact on developing a positive entrepreneurial identity within the local context. the socio-cultural aspects of this category expressed the understanding and experiences of the entrepreneurs' local context. The behaviours towards the local context are also influenced by the culture locally and regionally. The role of culture influences the team and the clients', the product and its content, as well as the ethical and quality expectations. All these factors were identified by the entrepreneurs as collective factors that have a direct influence on their activity. Further to this understanding is the experience in training and the importance of changing perceptions towards entrepreneurs to emphasise their role in the job market. Training programmes are working to emphasise the important role of entrepreneurship by bringing success stories and examples of successful entrepreneurs to share their journey. This plays a motivational role to encourage them to carry on their activity.

Understanding 4: the entrepreneurs' understanding and experiencing of the local context in this category has been introduced in relation to their market needs, the products needed and the possibilities the local market offer. Yet as a local entrepreneur there are few opportunities for them to gain clients' trust and present their product. This also relates to the perception of being a local enterprise from a social perspective. The public in Jordan do not seem to appreciate or trust the local products which presents a challenge for the entrepreneurs. This category further emphasises the social perceptions towards local products and services.

Through training the experience from local entrepreneurs can help establish the trust and learn negotiations as part of the business skills training. Training programmes have helped the entrepreneurs to understand their market segments and design strategies to address these markets locally and regionally and in some cases internationally.

Understanding 5: this category presented the understanding and experience of local context in respect to the entrepreneurial environment and ecosystem in Jordan. The processes, laws and regulations presented a challenge to the entrepreneurs. On the other hand, the entrepreneurs' ability to adapt their ideas to the local context was experienced in the training. The key outcome of learning is through introducing new experiences that challenge earlier knowledge. In this section, the entrepreneurs have introduced the challenges that they faced through their experiences in the local context, such as dealing with social perceptions and institutional challenges. Although learning can sometimes be inadequate for dealing with emerging developments or new situations, therefore, experience is time dependent and it changes depending on events (Morris et al., 2012). These experiences might change over time, and the local context will present different challenges and opportunities over time for the entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs learn from events as they happen, generating knowledge as a function and transforming themselves through experiences that are continuously created (Reuber and Fischer, 1999; Politis, 2005). It is therefore important to work with the entrepreneurs to develop and enhance the entrepreneurial environment and systems in Jordan.

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7.6 Variations in Understanding within the Empirical Sample

In the previous section, the phenomenon was explained and illustrated based on the understanding and experiences of the entrepreneurs using the theoretical model of structure of awareness as explained by Marton and Booth (1997). This means that the value of a dimension of variation changes in relation to the value associated to that category in respect to the complexity of experience. The aspects of the category are not discerned in less complex ways of understanding the phenomenon and finally the relationships between the dimensions of variation. In other words, the way of understanding local context and its relationship to the entrepreneurial activity in this empirical study differ from each other, reflecting the richness and strength of relationships between the categories. These variations can be related to the characteristics of the sample, such as gender, years of experience, stage of the start-up. These variables are presented in association with the entrepreneurs' sample in Table 7.1 below:

Table 7.2: Variation in understanding and experience of the sample characteristics

	Assess local context	Perception towards entrepreneurs	Culture	Market	Institutional factors
Number of Entrepreneurs	1	2	3	3	5
Gender: Male Female	1	2	3	1 2	3 2
Start-up phase Growth/Acceleration phase	1	1 1	1 2	2 1	2 4
Total	1	2	3	3	5

The sample is male dominated, although females were appropriately represented (4 out of 14). Gender did not seem to be related significantly to differences in understanding and defining local context, however. The category that showed more significance was the stage of development of the entrepreneurs' business. Those at a more advanced stage of their start-up expressed more complex understandings and experiences, probably due to having more knowledge and experience. They identified more complex aspects for each category. The two early stage start-ups (one male and one female) are the two who reported the same challenges in respect to accessing markets and building trust with clients. A more complex aspect is

understanding of the entrepreneurial environment; in this category most of the entrepreneurs have contributed to the different aspects irrespective of their start-up stage. Considering that the process is evolving, this shows that all stages have identified an aspect in this category. The variation in understanding can be attributed to the entrepreneurs' experience and understanding and there is little evidence that it might be influenced by other sources.

Entrepreneurs understanding of their context is based on their experiences within their local context. This has been presented as a direct relation with cultural, societal and institutional factors in Jordan. Their experiences of their local context is directly related to their familiarity, through which they make their decisions. This has been translated as a shared decision process based on their familiarity from their interaction with their environment and analysing the markets (Schwens and Kabst 2011). Furthermore, familiarity with their institutional context in the region is also conditioned by their experience in the local environment (Coeurderoy and Murray 2008) which influence their decision to internationalise or stay local. This has been evident in the categories of understanding, reflecting their understanding and familiarity with their local context. Entrepreneurs are being encouraged to take risks and transform their ideas into business, yet the legal and financial systems do not encourage risk taking and failure is a source of social stigma, and hence fear among entrepreneurs. The cultural behaviour towards entrepreneurs as employers or as serious business people is not very supportive: people prefer established companies and becoming an employee rather than an entrepreneur. From a temporal dimension, the region is currently experiencing political instability which limits access to certain markets. Yet, at the same time, entrepreneurship is being encouraged for strategic reasons as a way of preventing the instability from spilling over into Jordan, since it is believed that entrepreneurship can tackle social inequality and high unemployment. These contextual factors have affected entrepreneurs in different ways. The difference in their impact can be attributed to their start-up stage, for example new start-ups have opted to stay within the local market due to the instability, they were impacted with the societal perceptions in attracting talent and they are faced with institutional challenges in terms of support. Meanwhile, the entrepreneurs at the growth and acceleration phase have altered their market strategy to target other markets in the region, they showed more confidence in competing in these markets. They have identified local talent in the new immigrants and they showed understanding to the institutional challenges as well.

7.7   Hierarchy of Understanding and Experiencing

The previous section discussed the relationship between what and how entrepreneurs understand and experience learning in respect to their local context. This section will explore what the relationship means from the entrepreneurs' perspective. Through phenomenography the entrepreneurs' world is one, and not separated between an objective outside world and an internally constructed subjective world. As explained by Ramsden et al. (1993, p. 303) "There is only one world to which we have access – the world-as-experienced". Understanding and experiencing, therefore, form one unit of the entrepreneurs' world.

The key aspects of this analysis are presented in table 7.2 below and serve to identify the relationship between understanding and experience. To ask a simple question: what does it mean? The table puts together the answer in an easy-to-read illustration explaining how the entrepreneurs understood and experienced their local context. This illustrates how the various understandings build on each other. Five qualitatively different definitions have emerged, with each one inclusive of and more complex than the previous one, building towards the fifth category which is most complex. The same process and inclusiveness goes for the two categories regarding the experiencing of local context in training programmes.

Table 7.3: The role of training programmes in shaping entrepreneurs' understanding

Understanding Role of Training	1. Assess local context	2. Perceptions towards entrepreneurs	3. Culture	4. Markets	5. Institutional factors
Business Skills Training understanding the market, clients, products and business skills	Through training entrepreneurs learned about local market, clients and available opportunities	Through training and business incubators entrepreneurs developed networks and community that enabled them overcome perceptions	Understand the role of culture and how to use as an advantage especially when going into regional markets	Through training, entrepreneurs learned about the market shares, market availability and how to identify their targets	Through training entrepreneurs were able to understand the legal and institutional framework of their activity
Changing Perceptions success stories, local examples and adapting ideas to local context	Through training entrepreneurs learned about entrepreneurs' success stories	The presented success stories helped entrepreneurs with the challenges in the societal perception towards them	Entrepreneurs learned how to adapt their ideas to fit the local culture	Through training entrepreneurs learned from successful entrepreneurs their market strategies	Entrepreneurs also learned about the challenges in the environment and how other entrepreneurs dealt with it

The table presents the role of training in shaping their understanding of their local context as part of their lived world and form the knowledge and skills through which they perform their actions and decision-making process.

Training programmes have addressed social aspects in addition to skills training for the entrepreneurs to equip them to deal with their local context in Jordan. The dynamic relationship between the learning experience and understanding builds on the entrepreneurs' ability to introduce change and self-efficacy. It also relates to the stipulation of what change is implied by learning? In this chapter the change relates to skills development and changing perceptions. Entrepreneurs ability to take action, identify opportunities is dependent of their level of education and understanding of the opportunities available (Xheneti and Bartlett, 2012). The relationship between the social and skills aspects of local context is strongly discerned in the entrepreneurs' understanding of their local context. The training has contributed to the cognitive perspective of the entrepreneurs, building on their prior knowledge and information and leading to effective decision making (Land, 1992). Although the training categories have introduced variation in their aspects, the two categories combined present part of the entrepreneurs' skills and knowledge of their local context. Variation is an important feature in the phenomenographic analysis, since an aspect of a phenomenon can only be discerned as part of awareness if possible variation in recognized (Marton and Booth, 1997). The variation in the training categories has been articulated in this chapter as part of the entrepreneurs' experience.

7.8   Conclusion

This chapter presents the two aspects of the entrepreneurs' understanding and experience of their local context, thus setting out the second part of the empirical analysis of this thesis. First, it introduced the hierarchy of understanding and experiencing of their local and regional contexts. Then it introduced the understanding and learning experiencing of local context as a process through which entrepreneurs perform their activity. The next chapter will further elaborate on the entrepreneurs' understanding of their local and regional context by introducing a framework for understanding context, followed by the research implications and concluding remarks. In the next chapter both aspects of understanding and experiencing context will be synthesized together to complete the understanding from the entrepreneurs' perspective.

Chapter 8 - The Entrepreneurs' Context

8.0   Introduction

This chapter will present the progress of the study and its final findings. Chapter 1 presented the theoretical framework and boundaries of the study, the outline of the research and how the understanding and experiencing of local context would be captured. Chapter 2 identified previous research and methodological gaps to provide the basis for this research. Chapter 3 have identified phenomenography as the suitable methodology. Chapter 4 reported the empirical sample and data collection protocol. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 introduced the empirical results setting out variations in understanding and experiencing according to the phenomenography research, along with the understanding of local context and the context of regional political instability. This chapter further conceptualizes the findings and presents the understanding-based framework of context. It will discuss the research implications and its contribution as well as suggest further future research at both the policy level and the entrepreneurial activity level.

Behaviour is a function of both the person and the situation (Lewin, Lippitt and White, 1939; Schneider 1981; Terborg, 1981). In respect to entrepreneurship activity, one perception of context is not enough to understand the overall activity and the different dimensions that play a role in these activities. It is therefore important to bring together all these understandings to present an idiosyncratic understanding that can build on and extend our current understanding of context. This study will use and adapt the understanding-based theory (Lamb et al. 2011), to capture context from the entrepreneurs' perspective, in so doing introducing a framework for understanding. The framework presents the various understanding of what local context is and how entrepreneurs experience the regional instability. The importance of capturing the variation presents people's abilities in searching, processing and scanning in order to identify opportunities (Jones et al. 2014). The idiosyncratic nature of the individuals' experiences means that entrepreneurs do not identify the same opportunities (Shane 2000).

The framework of understanding moves beyond the economic and situational explanation of contexts to allow entrepreneurs to demonstrate characteristics and orientations of their lived experiences from a phenomenographic perspective (Lamb et al., 2011). Answering previous literature calls to find alternate strategies to entrepreneurship context to further our understanding of its role (See Bamberger et al. 2015; Zahra et al. 2014; Welter 2011).

This presents a new avenue to expand existing understandings of context that have hitherto presented context as a unidirectional element, by showing context as an integrated and dynamic part with the entrepreneurial activity and the entrepreneurs' ability through their knowledge and experience present their decision making in conjunction with these contextual factors. The learning experience of context in training revealed two variant categories: changing perceptions towards entrepreneurship, focusing on behaviour aspects of learning. This was introduced by presenting local examples and case studies to encourage entrepreneurs to take risks and to introduce a positive image of entrepreneurship. Further the second category of learning experience has focused on developing business skills to enable entrepreneurs to identify and learn how to manipulate their business context. The two learning experiences have contributed and emphasized the role of entrepreneurship as social system part of the context they operate within and addresses issues that are real for the entrepreneurs and the entrepreneurship activity at the local and regional levels. In addition, these two categories relate to challenges identified by the entrepreneurs within their local context. For example, entrepreneurs have mentioned that perceptions towards them in terms of career choice or being an employer is not favourable. The training programmes have introduced success stories of other entrepreneurs to counter these perceptions and to encourage the new entrepreneurs. Same with the business skills training, which addresses the market strategies, investment and product. This shows that there is an institutional awareness of these challenges and are being addressed through training.

The contribution of this study is to capture the variation in entrepreneurs' understanding and experience of context. Further into focusing on the different behaviours and characteristics in the decision-making process for their entrepreneurial activity. Context in this study has introduced further understanding that goes beyond national, regional or industry as it was identified and beyond the contextual factors. This was exhibited through the fact that entrepreneurs are always looking beyond their national market especially in a region that shares the same language, values and culture. When entrepreneurs talk about market it refers to regional context same as culture same as institutional. Entrepreneurs eluded that perceptions towards them in the region seems to be more favourable regionally than locally as they understand the market and provide content that the market needs. Although the instability introduced changes to their strategic plans especially in relation to market expansion, these changes were taken in different ways based on each start-up. For the less established ones the

focus turned local until they establish their products and services. As for the start-ups who are in the growth phase it was a matter of shifting to the gulf countries.

Using phenomenography, I have introduced categories of descriptions which together present the entrepreneurs' understanding and experience of context. Each category introduced different aspects of how they contemplate new situation with prior experience through reasoning processes (Gentner, 1983; Jones et al. 2014). In this study, the variation in the entrepreneurs' individual understanding and experience of their context introduced an independent conceptualization (Klein et al., 2000). The entrepreneurs understanding and experiences of their local and regional contexts and the role of training programme in shaping their understanding and experiences. In this study the group of entrepreneurs are part of Oasis 500 business incubator and they all operate in Jordan as the country for their activity.

8.1   Entrepreneurs' understanding and experiences of their Context

In this section, the entrepreneurs' understanding of their context is articulated in terms of their narratives that articulate their actions. I will explain their reasoning approaches to dealing with their context and the new situations presented as a result of regional instability. Entrepreneurs have demonstrated locus of control in their local and regional contexts (Rotter, 1966). The cues provided to them in their environment have prompted them to act in accordance to the challenges and opportunities provided based on their understanding and experiences. The entrepreneurs maintained a plan of action despite the controlling influences presented in their contexts.

Individuals draw on their experience to make sense of uncertain, novel and complex situations (Jones et al. 2014). Conceptually, there are three dominating factors within the identified Contexts: characteristics of the entrepreneurs; knowledge-based understanding and experiences; and the ability to assess and access markets and investors. These are all embodied in the entrepreneurial activity and form part of the emergent analysis of the "what" and "how" aspects of each question. Further the role of training in addressing the issues identified in their context through business skills training and changing perceptions towards entrepreneurship by facing the challenges are also presented. The following discussion both confirms and extends the contribution of existing explanations of context and the entrepreneurs cognitive abilities to draw on their experiences to deal with new situations. Researchers

disagree on the dimensions of context (Zahra et al., 2014), the more established categories are temporal, industry and market, spatial, social and institutional, my findings will be synthesized using these dimensions. I will elaborate further on the understanding of entrepreneurs within their environment from these themes.

8.1.1   The temporal dimension

Previous research in the temporal dimension is still fragmented due to the lack of a coherent framework for studying time (Welter, 2011). The overall approach to studying time in the field of entrepreneurship has been sparse and unsystematic. The need to understand the temporal dimension to further our knowledge of time in the field of entrepreneurship is to determine the decision-making process of the entrepreneurs. Time has an influence on the strategic decisions in terms of opportunities, risk and causal dynamics (Welter, 2011; Zahra et al., 2014). The importance of capturing the temporal dimension answers questions such as what causes what and under what conditions? This is important for the organizational emergence (Carter et el. 1996; Reynolds and Miller, 1992) as well as for the entrepreneurial orientation (Zahra et al., 2000).

This research has captured the entrepreneurs' behaviours and strategic decisions during a period of regional political instability. The time-space dynamic is of importance in this study since the entrepreneurs' behaviour cannot be understood independently of these contexts and these contexts in turn provide complex possibilities for their actions. During this period of regional political instability, the entrepreneurs have expressed different strategic decisions in terms of their market focus, access to investors, access to suppliers and access to business opportunities. The instability has changed their plans from the long term to the short term, and from the targeting of regional markets to a focus on local markets or a decision to compete in more difficult markets. Entrepreneurs have successfully and proactively classified their environmental conditions in a sequential and timely order with their activity. This allowed the entrepreneurs to develop their own perspectives based on a proper sense of their contexts that allowed their processes to be spatially and temporally structured.

8.1.2   The industry and market dimension

Previous research on the industry and market dimension has addressed the economic opportunities between countries, industries and the competitive forces (Porter, 1980; Hoskisson et al., 2013). These are considered to be the strategic decisions that entrepreneurs must make. Previous research has also addressed the timing of entry and exiting industries (Grant, 2012) and how this can affect a business' survival. The focus has been on factors triggering changes and shifts in the industry landscape (Short et al., 2009), as well as the decision to internationalize operations (Autio et al., 2000; Zahra et al., 2000) and the importance of the time at which these decisions are made (Autio et al., 2000). The research into market and industry has been diverse and examined the relationship between industry context and entrepreneurial activity. The research, however, has lacked a focus on how entrepreneurs' shift across markets especially in emerging economies (Zahra et al., 2014) and within regional instability.

Different context activities were recognized in this research. For example, I have captured the different market strategies adopted by the entrepreneurs in understanding their local and regional contexts. In the understanding of local context, the categories of market strategies focused on the entrepreneurs' ability to enter the market, and how to present their new product and their ability to break into the market. The market need is recognized and is very well known, but the clients' trust in the local product becomes the challenge. The relationship with the prospective clients was not supportive of the entrepreneurs' products because they are "local". The entrepreneurs' strategies were therefore to reduce prices and to offer their product for trial for free in order to gain trust and establish their position within the local market, especially given that the competition comes from international companies that are well established in the market, thus in effect using "sequencing" strategies (Zahra et al., 2014) to decide logically the various steps to use to enter the market. Although the need is there, therefore, the entrepreneur has a niche product and the challenge lies in the perception of local entrepreneurs and their products. Furthermore, in a region surrounded with instability, the options to leave the local market are limited, and indeed non-existent for some.

On the other hand, in the context of regional political instability, entrepreneurs who were targeting regional markets have chosen not to internationalize due to the instability. Entrepreneurs are instead focusing on local markets, taking short term deals due to the high

uncertainty and political volatility in the region. Although Jordan was not considered the main market, and all the entrepreneurs shared that their target was initially the
 region as a whole, the instability in the region changed their focus. This research has not focused on the aspects themselves, as in previous research, but on the entrepreneurs' understanding and experiences, therefore the strategies are the opposite of what would be found in a developed and stable economies in terms of confidence to internationalize. Entrepreneurs have demonstrated lack of competitiveness in international markets and ability to develop unique small-specific assets. Their likelihood to capture these opportunities effectively depends on their market positioning (Veglio and Zucchella, 2015).   Entrepreneurs have learned about various business skills in the training programmes attended. This also helped them understand and shape their strategies in terms of market. Although the training introduced different business skills models to learn from but the reality of instability influenced their strategies in terms of staying in the local market.

The decision not to internationalize their markets, to focus on short term contracts; to not compete with high purchase economies and to stay within the local market are unfamiliar decisions in the entrepreneurship research. The role of space-time in this category is also evident. The space-time effect in relation to the entrepreneurial activity is clear in their decision-making process. Due to the regional events, entrepreneurs have established their own priorities and activities based on the spatial-temporal realities presented in their contexts. The spatial-temporal organization of behaviour is the result of the entrepreneurs' perspectives of their context, and consequently their assessment of and access to markets and investors.

8.1.3   The spatial dimension

Space is an important dimension of the entrepreneurial context in terms of the role of the location in which new ventures develop and grow (Zahra et al., 2014) and it is the focal aspect of my research as well. From a geographic perspective, and as pointed out in Chapter 2, the region suffers from political instability and economic fragmentation. This has added to the challenges that entrepreneurs face. Researchers have commented that entrepreneurship cautions that geography alone is not the causal agent for variations in benefits, but rather provides a lens through which we can crystalize the effects of other factors and how to overcome the challenges related to geography (Zahra et al., 2011; 2014). Although the MENA region is witnessing a period of instability and economic fragmentation, entrepreneurs are still

focused on developing their activities within the region, capitalizing on the demands identified within the region, and their understanding of the culture, values and expectations of the clients within the region. Although, as mentioned in the previous dimension, the instability has prevented access to some markets and shifted the entrepreneurial activity to local markets still for others, the region has presented opportunities. In this context, the social and cultural dimension is a competitive advantage.

8.1.4   The social dimension

Researchers have addressed the social networks, but there is still limited analysis of the social capital these networks generate. Furthermore, the dark side of the social aspects of context need further research. In addition to network research there has been a shift in focus towards the macro-conditions of national innovation and national entrepreneurship systems in addition to entrepreneurial ecosystems (Acs et al., 2013; Wright, 2012). In this research, the category of Culture introduced perceptions towards entrepreneurs and products from the social aspects as a competitive advantage but also recognizes the dark side of the social aspect. The expectation is that local entrepreneurs must comply with local values and cultures and this can be limiting for the entrepreneurs' creativity. Clients do buy different products from international companies but will not buy the same product from a local company because of their expectations that a local company should not produce it. This introduces limitations to the entrepreneurs' products. As explained by Bandura (2002, p. 274) "people live their lives in sociocultural milieus that differ in their shared values, customs, social practices and institutional constrains and opportunity structures". Entrepreneurs have identified those constraints and opportunities that are presented by the cultural milieus of their clients. Cultures are diverse and dynamic social systems and not static monoliths. This is presented in the intraindividual variation across the multifaceted dynamic nature of cultures (Bandura 2002), through which entrepreneurs have expressed the variation in the form of different strategic decisions so to adapt to the dynamism of culture in terms of product and client expectations.

Previous explanations of context were relational rather than offering an interconnected and interrelated approach to context. The integrated approach to context shows the depth of context in entrepreneurial activity and offers an understanding of the entrepreneurs' approaches towards market, social, spatial and institutional contexts (Zahra et al., 2014). All these explanations in previous research have recognized the importance of context in relation to the

entrepreneurial activity but have failed to capture the variation in the entrepreneurs' understanding and experiences. The entrepreneurs' social cognition of their spatial temporal context is therefore the focus in this research. Entrepreneurs bring their influence to bear directly on themselves and their environment in managing their activity. As explained by Bandura (2002, p.270), "in many spheres of life people do not have direct control over the social conditions and institutional practices that affect their everyday lives." Despite these realisations, entrepreneurs have altered their activity to adapt to their social conditions and institutional practices within the context of regional political instability. Entrepreneurs have used their knowledge, skills and resources attained in the training programmes to ensure the continuity of their activity. Training programmes have addressed the social dimension and tried to encourage entrepreneurship by introducing local success stories to positively influence entrepreneurs' perceptions.

8.2 The Hierarchy of Entrepreneurs' Contexts

In the previous section I have demonstrated that understanding local context and experiencing the context of regional political instability are joint dimensions of entrepreneurial activity. I will also provide an alternative conceptualisation of context that specifically accommodates variant and idiosyncratic behaviours of the entrepreneurs.

Table 8.1 summarizes the intraindividual variations and illustrates that entrepreneurs experience a limited number of qualitatively different understandings of local context. These understandings are arranged and related to each other in an inclusive hierarchy. This means that understandings 1-5 are related and build on each other, i.e. the broad meaning and understandings of context spread across the experience of context to form one unit of the entrepreneurs' world and their activity. Their experience of the context of regional political instability is correspondingly connected with entrepreneurial activity. The comprehensive relationships within these contexts make the understanding and experience of contexts complete and comprehensive. Definition 1 of Defining Local Context therefore presents the category with the fewest aspects of the entrepreneurs' understanding of their local context, whereas definition 5 presents the category with more complex aspects of the entrepreneurs' understanding (according to Marton and Booth, 1997).

In this research factors of social, temporal, culture, market and institutions are local and regional. These factors affect entrepreneurs in every aspect of their activity in terms of the product design, assessing the needs, perceptions and expectations, competition and institutional facilitation at the regional level. Country location and timing are two factors that affect the entrepreneurial behaviours and patterns (Jones and Coviello 2005).   What this research have identified that context is not boarder bound, the factors are regional. That's why it was important to capture the entrepreneurs' own perspective of the contextual factors that affect their activity, locally, regionally and in training. Previous research on context did not account for the variation in the entrepreneurs' own definition. Individuals are nested within environments (Klein et al., 2000), and their understanding, based on their knowledge and skills acquired through training, informs their decision-making processes. Through understanding and experiencing, the study captures the contexts of these arrangements and the variations between the understandings identified by the entrepreneurs. Experiencing events and learning from the experience can contribute to better knowledge about entrepreneurial activity. As outlined by Morris et al., (2012 p. 23) "Learning outcomes are the result of experiential processing where the diversity and novelty of the stock of events give rise to enhanced learning", but these outcomes and process are individualistic and it influences their behaviours in different ways. Therefore, while we know that the variety of experiences affects the individuals' behaviours, what each entrepreneur take from their experience and how they deal with new situational contexts still under explored (Jones et al. 2014; Lamb et al. 2011). Hence the focus on understanding and experiencing context from a local and regional perspectives and in training in this research. The explanation is based on a bottom-up approach and the lived experiences of the entrepreneurs introducing an idiosyncratic side of context capturing the variations in understanding through story telling. Entrepreneurs are socially nested in the contexts that they interact and operate within.

The table below explains how entrepreneurs experience is a process of reasoning in which new stimuli are introduced and compared with prior knowledge in order to make sense of the unknown (Jones et al. 2014).

Table 8.1: Entrepreneurs' decision making within their contexts and the role of training in shaping their local context

LOCAL CONTEXT the Role of Training Programmes REGIONAL CONTEXT	Assess local context Business and changing perceptions through Training	Perceptions towards Entrepreneurs Changing perceptions through Training	Culture Changing perceptions through Training	Market Business Skills Training	Institutional Factors Business Skills Training
Access to Investors Strategies to attract investors during current events	Entrepreneurs understand challenges in attracting investors to local market	Ideas are attractive perceptions towards the region affect investors decisions	Cultural expectations and values. The need to diversify activity	The region is not an attractive market for investors	How supportive is the environment attract investors?
Access to Suppliers How to safely access suppliers in the region?	Entrepreneurs understand the regional events impact on accessing suppliers	Knowing the best suppliers to deal with. Utilising their knowledge	Culture doesn't play a role with the suppliers	Despite the instability, entrepreneurs' activities are still going	What are the regional IP laws and regulations and do they protect local entrepreneurs?
Focus on Local Market Strategies towards local market during regional instability	Entrepreneurs' decision to stay in local market based on their understanding of the opportunities	Entrepreneurs understand the societal perceptions towards them based on their experiences	Culture is commonly shared regionally and locally due to shared values and language	Entrepreneurs have experienced an increase in talent and clients due to current events	Trust and encouragement for local products and services are needed at the institutional level
Access to Regional Markets Strategies to access regional markets during instability	Entrepreneurs understand market needs and challenges	Entrepreneurs' understand the competition in the regional market	Entrepreneurs understand the importance of culture locally and regionally	Strategies towards markets have changed due to the events of instability.	How the current laws and regulation assist local entrepreneurs to reach regional markets?
Assessing Regional Events Assessing regional events to contextualise activities	Entrepreneurs understand local and regional events	Societal perceptions towards entrepreneurs is negative.	There are cultural expectations that affect entrepreneurs' activity	Entrepreneurs reassessing their market strategies	Further institution support local entrepreneurs is needed

The emergent understandings and experiences of context summaries the entrepreneurs lived experiences of their context locally and regionally. It also captures how through training issues of perceptions and business skills have been addressed. Entrepreneurs have identified the negative perceptions towards them also identified the challenges within the market locally and regionally. Through training programmes these issues have been recognized. It is safe to say that training programmed have prepared them to deal with their contexts.

This study will conceptualize the individual level performance of the entrepreneur within these different contexts. This was evident in terms of decisions to internationalise or stay in the local market in this research. An understanding of the enablers and constraints of entrepreneurial activity can help policy makers and entrepreneurs to manipulate them (Autio, 2010). The framework of context will present the entrepreneurs' reasoning based on their understanding of the new situation presented in the regional political instability. It will reflect the understanding of local contextual factors and when presented with new stimuli of regional instability how entrepreneurs are reacting. Taking into consideration their previous experiences and the role of training in contributing to their knowledge.

This study attempted to answer the question "how do entrepreneurs understand and experience their context and how training programmes shape their understanding?". Through phenomenography the variation in the entrepreneurs' understanding and experience of their context was presented. I argued that the existing approaches to understanding context have been top-down, where the approach been taken to identify context and entrepreneurial activity has been relational, separating the entrepreneur from their context, rather than focusing on context from the entrepreneurs' own perspectives and understanding. I further argued that these explanations are dominated by rationalist and objectivist approaches. This research, in contrast, has used an interpretive approach as an alternative lens to understand context from the entrepreneurs' perspective. The contributions of this empirical study will be explored in this chapter by expanding our understanding of entrepreneurs' context.

Throughout this process I have considered the possibility that the definitions and understandings might, or might not, be hierarchical in nature since some can be considered independent, especially with the least complex constructs. As I progressed in my analysis and understanding of the definitions from the entrepreneurial activity perspective I concluded, however, that these categories are hierarchical and build on each other, as the table below

explains. The table lists each understanding of local context and each experience of the context of regional instability as they are trying to make a decision regarding their activity. How to address the interplay between the local and regional contexts and the role of training is shaping these decisions.

8.3   Establishing the Framework of Context

The phenomenographic methodology provided the theoretical framework for this study. The empirical data at the core of this research featured number of variations as reported through phenomenography. These variations are intended to enhance our understanding of the entrepreneurs' context. To understand the linkages between contexts (local and regional) and outcomes (entrepreneurial activity) fully, it is prudent to focus on a framework for understanding context. Contextualization, as defined by Rousseau and Fried (2001, p. 1), is the "linking of observations to a set of relevant facts, events or point of view that makes possible research and theory that form part of a larger whole". In this section I will present the entrepreneurs' understanding of their local context and how they use their knowledge and experience to deal with novel situation presented in the regional instability. Adopting the "understanding-based theory" approach of Lamb et al. (2011), it is of importance to move away from a descriptive approach of context into an understanding based approach through which context is presented as a process within the entrepreneurial activity.

Through the framework of understanding context, entrepreneurs' when presented with new regional stimuli of instability. Entrepreneurial attitudes are influenced by experience and by contextual cues which influence attitudes and behaviours (Morris et al., 2012). It is noted by researchers that the experiential nature of entrepreneurship and its implications are underdeveloped (Cope and Watts, 2000).

Table 8.2: Entrepreneurs' Context Framework, adapted from Lamb et al. (2011):

Experiencing context of Regional Instability (vertical axis) — *Understanding Local Context* (horizontal axis)

	Assess local context	Perceptions to Entrepreneurs	Culture	Market	Institutional Factors
5. Access to Investors	Identify potential investors	Ideas are attractive, the region is not	Interested in the idea but not the region	Markets available for the product/service	Investors don't feel safe to invest in start-up in the region
4. Access to Suppliers	Regional events presented new situation to entrepreneurs	Establish trust with new suppliers	Culture doesn't affect suppliers' choice in the region	Entrepreneurs knowledge and experience are limited	Entrepreneurs needs to understand IP laws and regulations in the suppliers' country.
3. Focus on Local Market	Regional events presented new opportunities in local market	Regional events affected markets, entrepreneurs are forced to deal with perceptions locally	Entrepreneurs depth of experience enabled them to deal with culture and perceptions	Entrepreneurs familiarity in markets enabled them to identify opportunities	Institutional support to local products and services needed to change perceptions
2. Access to Regional Market	Entrepreneurs start with local ideas and target regional markets	Perceptions towards entrepreneurs presents a negative experience locally that affects their activity	Entrepreneurs know the cultural needs in the market and using their knowledge as a competitive edge	Decisions to target regional market or stay locally depends on experience, sector and competition	What options do entrepreneurs have in terms of exit strategy locally and regionally?
1. Assess regional events	Entrepreneurs noticing and assessing local needs and regional events	Entrepreneurs are trying to understand and deal with local perceptions towards them	Culture is both a local and regional factor that affect the entrepreneurial activity	Entrepreneurs target both local and regional markets as part of their strategies	Regional events have stimulated local policy makers to encourage entrepreneurship locally

The framework provides a focus on the variation of entrepreneurs' understanding and experiences of their local and during the events of regional instability; and the role of training in shaping it. The framework summarises the entrepreneurs' context and sums their behaviours. In the framework entrepreneurs are presented with a new situation due to regional political instability. As a result of the new stimuli entrepreneurs have demonstrated different abilities and ways to achieve their goals in a systematic pattern to align their activity (Gentner 1983; Halford 1987). Entrepreneurs understanding and experience of their contexts and the role of training in shaping their experiences has been demonstrated through their ability to reason and assess the new situation and its impact on their activity. Entrepreneurs reason their activity through a process of recollection based on their experiences (Holyoak and Thagard, 1996). Entrepreneurs in the framework have been presented with a new situation, they have relied on their understanding and experiences to process their activity to achieve their objectives.

The first category of **Assessing regional events / Assess local context**; entrepreneurs are at the early stage of noticing and reasoning local and regional environments. They are focusing on what is needed in the local market and noticing what is going on in the region. It presents their ability to notice and being intuitive to local needs and regional events. In this category, their activity is not affected and they carry out their operations, but fully aware of the regional events. The contextual factors of in this category are focused on what is needed locally. Regional events have little impact on their activity albeit their alertness to what's going on.

The second category **Access regional market / Perceptions towards entrepreneurs**, they are aware of the regional events and local perceptions. In this category the relation between local and regional contexts is based on the recollection of many experiences locally and regionally. They are partially comparing with aspects of new situation and events. These new events have limited their access to regional markets, combined with their experience of the local perceptions towards them. These two categories led entrepreneurs to change their original market plans, despite local perceptions towards them. Although perceptions towards entrepreneurs have also been addressed in training programmes, their experience was shaped by local examples presented in training programmes adding to their recollection of experiences and increased their confidence. Their reasoning of contextual factors has led them to stay within the local market and deal with the local perceptions. Compiling their knowledge of successful examples presented in the entrepreneurship programmes and their depth of experience and familiarity of local market.

The third category of understanding and experiences is **Focus on Local Market / Culture**, the new situation presented in the regional instability has introduced new opportunities in the local market, entrepreneurs are noticing and as a result, they opted to stay within the local market. Culture is plays a role locally and regionally as it is shared among the region. Entrepreneurs' have extensive experience of the region and the market needs, therefore, the way to reach their goals is to capitalise on their experience and understanding of the cultural needs in the region. Entrepreneurs are aware of the challenges within the local market in terms of the social and cultural factors and the lack of trust in local products. It is not only the perception towards entrepreneurs that need to be addressed but also perceptions towards local services and products in general. This was implied in the training programmes through presenting local examples, in order to prepare entrepreneurs to deal with these new situations. Culture offers both opportunities and challenges. Entrepreneurs have capitalized on their understanding of the local market needs which gave them a niche in regional market, yet the expectations of clients from local entrepreneurs have limited their creativity and choice to diversify their products outside the cultural expectations. Culture is cross level context that goes between local and regional. The role of culture supports the decision to internationalise and to compete in the region based on the shared language and values and understanding of regional market needs of local content. This supports the entrepreneurs' ability to identify similarities and build on them. The interplay between local market and culture presents various experiences and understandings in this category and presented the entrepreneurs' depth and breadth of experience in terms of regional and local needs.

The fourth category is **Market / Access to suppliers**. In these categories entrepreneurs have also used their understanding and experience as a result of the new situation of regional instability to access suppliers and have reasoned their way to deal with the new situation in terms of meeting market demands and identifying new safe routs to reach suppliers. This is due to the first time being faced with these new events, entrepreneurs are forced to change their suppliers in addition to extending their knowledge to the institutional factors in protecting their product when identifying new suppliers. Entrepreneurs own experience is novel and they have learned from this new experience that was presented to them due to regional events. Understanding market also relates to their dealing with local clients, their ability to build trust in their services and being able to compete with international providers. The market / supplier category show that entrepreneurs have a little influence on these contextual factors and need to

work further to establish their position in the market. Entrepreneurs' experience and familiarity with the market is stronger than their experience of allocating new suppliers.

The fifth category is **Access to Investors / Institutional Factors**, entrepreneurs in this category have constructed their understanding based on their own knowledge and experiences dealing with investors and institutions. This category present complex relations between entrepreneurs, their environment and challenges presented due to the regional instability. Entrepreneurs have a dynamic and interactive relationship with their context. Local and regional contexts are at play and are activity driven. The legal structure has a direct effect on social and cultural attitudes, especially risk taking. Entrepreneurs know and have assessed each part of their context locally and regionally based on their own understanding and experience. Their knowledge of the region and local markets have supported their decision-making abilities in relation to their activity. The level of experience and confidence was also clear in the decision to compete regionally or stay in the local market. The ability to attract investors presented a new challenge, as investors are taking double risk in new start-up in a regional instability. This is a cross relational between local, regional and institutional factors. The categories have presented the entrepreneurs ability to relay on their experiences and knowledge to address the new situation presented in the region and their ability to recognize and establish meaningful patterns between their understanding of their local context and the relation with regional context at a time of instability.

The framework presents the process through which entrepreneurs map their understanding and experiencing of new events based on their ability to structurally align and recognize patterns (Gregoire et al. 2010; Jones et al. 2014) and to translate these patterns into actions. Entrepreneurs tell their stories of how they contextualise their activities within the local and regional contexts and how training programmes added to their knowledge and shaped their experiences within these contexts.

The framework of entrepreneurs' understanding explores the relationships across the different contexts micro-macro levels as identified locally and regionally. The interplay between local and regional contexts in relation to market, culture, institutions and perceptions are considered one. This goes beyond what was previously identified in terms of regional resources and knowledge spell over. The local-regional contexts relations are strong due to the shared values and culture within the region. This influenced the design of product, services and perceptions toward local

entrepreneurs and their ability to compete in the region. The interpretations and understanding of context in relation to each activity varies depending on the entrepreneurs' understanding and experience. Yet they all are cross level factors that are interchangeably between local and regional.

The role of training programmes related to the challenges identified by the entrepreneurs within their local context. Specifically, social perceptions towards entrepreneurship and market aspects of the business training. There is a level of awareness of these challenges hence these two emergent categories were pointed out by entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship training programmes focused on changing behaviours and encouraging entrepreneurs to deal with the challenge. As a result, some of the reported behaviours can be attributed to the role of training in raising awareness. The framework also presents the unexpected behaviours of the entrepreneurs in the context of regional political instability. The entrepreneurs' change from internationalising their activity towards a focus on local market, this behaviour is contrary to the entrepreneurial self-efficacy of risk-taking. They also tend to work with short-term contracts rather than long-term agreements due to the instability and uncertainty. The instability has casted a shadow of uncertainty among all countries in the region. In the events of instability entrepreneurs contextualise their activity in relation to the available markets and in relation to their confidence in competing in these markets. Established entrepreneurs have shown more confidence in targeting new markets meanwhile, the new start up opted to stay in the local market. This is in relation to their knowledge, skills and deep experience that supports their decisions.

In this research, context has a multilevel and cross level relationship with the entrepreneurial activity. The framework of entrepreneurs' context therefore presents these dynamics and the multiplicities of context and the complexity arising from the interplay between understanding local and experiencing context of regional instability. To understand the context within which entrepreneurs operate we can understand what enables their activity (Welter, 2011). Looking at the actions in this framework can therefore provide entrepreneurs with a clear understanding of the enabling aspects within their environment. Furthermore, the framework can be a basis for training programmes as it introduced behaviour changing aspects and business skills required to understand and operate within this context. Also, it can be used to design business plans based on the real issues within the context of the activity that can influence the success factors of the entrepreneurial activity.

8.4 Furthering our understanding of entrepreneurs' context relations

This study focused on the variation in the entrepreneurs understanding and experience. This presents a bottom up approach, grounding higher level phenomena presenting complex forms of interactions and mechanism into the cognitive world of the entrepreneurs (Barandiaran et al., 2009). Entrepreneurs seek to make sense of their context and shape it (Gabriel 2000). Through their narratives they articulate their actions such as business plans and pitches, they develop their products and target customers which demonstrate skills (Garud et al. 2014). The research has attempted to answer the questions "how do entrepreneurs understand their local context and experience the context of regional instability?" "How context was presented in training?". The findings of the research have captured the entrepreneurs' behaviours when presented with new events of regional instability. Their narratives introduced the challenges and opportunities presented in their local and regional contexts. They have also identified the role of training in furthering their understanding of their local and regional contexts. The finding of the research addresses the under explored gap in previous research of the variation in the entrepreneurs understanding and experience of their contextual factors.

The framework has captured these skills throughout the different categories of local context and how the entrepreneurs are making sense of the opportunities and designing their business plans to address these opportunities. Entrepreneurs have expressed factors of time especially in the current reginal instability and its role in contextualising their activity. As Garud and Giuliani (2013) explained the temporal factor as part of the entrepreneurs' journey, during which they must make sense of what has already transpired, coordinate what is currently unfolding and imagine what is plausible in the future. This process of reasoning and sense-making (Reuber 1997) transpires from their experience and understanding of their local and regional contexts, and emerged from the knowledge they acquired in the training programmes attended. This was explained by the entrepreneurs when they expressed what their original market targets were, how they changed them due to instability and when they hope to go back to these markets in the future.

Entrepreneurs within the MENA region although they share the same language, culture and values the decision to internationalise or stay local can be attributed to their ability to compete with other established companies especially international companies within the region. Their

decision to stay local is also faced with local perceptions towards their product and services which have an impact on their pricing. These findings are contrary to previous research of Coeurderoy and Murray (2008) stating that entrepreneurs seek countries that share same language or institutional structure, showing that despite the familiarity competition can be a deterrent to new start-ups within the region.

Entrepreneurs in this research have used their reasoning process through which they utilised their experience, understanding and expertise. This was evident in their choice to stay in the local market due to their sense of familiarity (Jones et al. 2014) despite the challenges of the societal and cultural perceptions towards them which they chose to change locally rather than deal with international competition regionally; especially for the nascent start-ups. Context was identified in terms of their local context, i.e. where the entrepreneur finds their opportunity, networks and resources. It was identified in relation to positioning within a geographic place and the policies within that region that facilitate access to talent and resources (Zahra et al., 2014). Although some entrepreneurs have initially targeted markets in Syria and Iraq based on their familiarity with the competition within these markets which allowed them to see themselves as fit within a familiar frame previously constructed (Coeurderoy and Murray 2008); knowing these markets are open to welcome their product as local suppliers from the region. Other entrepreneurs targeted other countries based on their learned and transferred judgements (Bingham and Eisenhardt 2011), utilising their deep knowledge of the industry (Reuber 1997) and the sector they are in, especially from a cultural understanding and perspective. These entrepreneurs capitalised on the need of local content (in terms of language and design) and they could compete in the region. Knowledge in the sector, industry and culture presented an opportunity to the entrepreneurs.

The temporal dimension of context has previously been dealt with unsystematically, meaning that this dimension has not been fully understood. Researchers have called for further longitudinal research to understand the impact of time on opportunities and entrepreneurial activities, especially in terms of evaluating the life cycle of entrepreneurial activities (Welter, 2011; Zahra and Wright, 2011). The temporal dimension plays a role in the way entrepreneurs experience context in training. Their learning is affected by the time in which they are operating, and their knowledge is challenged by the experiences they encounter (Morris et al., 2012). The social aspect has been introduced in previous research in terms of the networks within which the entrepreneurial activity takes place, including family, clients, employees, financial capital.

Research has also discussed the impact of family, and the role of small socioeconomic units. The relationship between social and institutional contexts has focused on the community and geography as means of linking social and spatial contexts, in addition to the institutional side, gender and the "dark side" of socio-spatial context and their role in entrepreneurship (Welter, 2011). Steyaert and Hjorth (2006, p.1), meanwhile, identified the influences of entrepreneurship as a form of "double sociality", in that entrepreneurship changes society, and society has an impact on entrepreneurship. The social dimension is a cross level dimension that affects the society's perceptions of the entrepreneurs and the entrepreneurs' identity within the society.

The framework of entrepreneurs' context contributes to narrowing the gaps in entrepreneurship context research by providing for an alternative approach beyond simply acknowledging the surroundings of the activity. The framework moves away from the sensitization of situational or temporal boundaries into direct specification of the nature and form of influence contextual factors presented for entrepreneurial activity. Context has been identified in terms of the environmental factors and "top-down" processes, which include upper level variables (Kozlowski and Klein, 2000; Bamberger, 2015). The framework also moves away from using context as the unit of analysis and away from using context as a variable against which the activity is measured. These variables have dominated the field of research, limiting our understanding of the multiplicity of context (Johns and Whetten, 1989; Zahra, 2007; Sarasvathy and Venkataraman, 2011; Welter, 2011; Zahra and Wright, 2011), into understanding the narratives through which entrepreneurs operate within their context.

The framework explores the interchangeable role of context between local and regional. It illustrates the entrepreneurs' ability to experience events that are part of their contexts, especially in a politically unstable region and extend their knowledge and process of sense-making to deal with these events. The interplay of local and regional contexts has also captured the characteristics and behaviours of entrepreneurs within these contexts. For example, when understanding local context entrepreneurs focused on knowing what each context offers. While the regional political instability has raised matters of security, entrepreneurs identified the stability within their local context. In understanding access to talent within the local context, entrepreneurs established internships and trained new talent, while focusing their business opportunities locally. With respect to assessing the culture towards entrepreneurs and products, they have demonstrated the ability to understand the regional and local competitive edge of being an entrepreneur in the region, while the impact on local market as a result of regional

instability has introduced new opportunities, clients and talent, presenting more opportunities to entrepreneurs who know the culture. These three categories have demonstrated entrepreneurs' adaptability in dealing with local and regional contexts. Access to suppliers in the region, and a focus on local markets, in addition to access to investors and understanding the entrepreneurial environment, however, present more challenging aspects of the local and regional contexts. Entrepreneurs have demonstrated less ability to influence these constructs.

8.5   Implications for Entrepreneurship Context

In addition to the empirical and theoretical contributions outlined above, in this section I will present further implications of this empirical study for further research, for policy and for entrepreneurs to consider.

8.5.1   Theoretical Implications

The theoretical contribution arising from this study is the framework of entrepreneurs' context that captured the variation in entrepreneurs' own understanding and experiences. Further methodological implications and investigation is therefore needed to investigate entrepreneurs lived experience in different contexts. The answers to these questions require further investigation to see if they change over time or if the emergent categories of description become more complex and introduce new aspects. This raises another question of whether phenomenography as a methodology can provide answers to these questions. An investigation of the framework of entrepreneurship in developing countries is needed to establish if the understanding is the same within countries in the region or countries in similar circumstances. Work should also be done to capture the emergent behaviour of entrepreneurs and further manipulate the contexts to facilitate the entrepreneurial activity, since the understanding-based framework of context has enabled the integration of contexts at different levels as part of the entrepreneurs' experiences.

8.5.2   Practical Implications for Entrepreneurs

The implications for entrepreneurs are an essential aspect of this framework. The implications that arise from this research address the entrepreneurial activity and the entrepreneurs' interaction with and understanding of their context. The study has captured the context of entrepreneurs and their activity through the articulation of their understanding and experiencing

of context and has used this to construct a framework for understanding context. The study demonstrated the dynamic and lived experience of entrepreneurs within their contexts. These interactions offer new relationships that the business incubators, NGOs and training providers need to take into consideration. Further testing of this framework can offer amendments and opportunities for future research, especially for training programme so as to understand the different aspects of the context and its role in the entrepreneurial activity as enablers or constraints. Entrepreneurs and training providers can use the framework to design and deliver specific needs entrepreneurs would require based on current events within their contexts.

The entrepreneurs in this study have identified their local context and their experience of the context of regional political instability. The previous understanding of context was identified from the environmental perspective rather than from the entrepreneurs' perspective, capturing social, spatial and temporal variables through comparisons among different contexts. This study captures the direct relationship between local and regional contexts focusing on the entrepreneurs' own understanding and experiences of context. Since understanding is personal, as is experience and knowledge, further research is recommended to capture entrepreneurs and context relations and the role of training in shaping these understandings.

It is important for the entrepreneurs in the MENA region to understand the local-regional interplay as the region share same values and language. This can help expand the entrepreneurial activity and target the region as one market. In doing so the region needs to adapt its institutions and regulations to facilitate these activities.

8.5.3   Policy Implications

This study captures the real issues in the local and regional contexts, as expressed by the entrepreneurs, thereby offering policymakers a first-hand approach to, and understanding of, the major challenges, as well as offering a framework that captures these issues. This study offers a different and comprehensive approach to address the local and regional contexts of entrepreneurship in Jordan and context in training. Moreover, this study offers a partnership with all parties to work together to improve the overall environment and establishing regional networks. These changes can be key enablers for entrepreneurs' activities by facilitating regulations and laws to protect IPs, R&D and offer incentives for entrepreneurs and new start-ups, while also offering and facilitating partnerships across the country to achieve

entrepreneurial inclusiveness. This offers an opportunity to build on the entrepreneurial knowledge as partners in the policy making decisions and to enhance their cognitive experience.

At the local level, entrepreneurs in Jordan need to have a supportive ecosystem that supports their activities. Especially in terms of laws, regulations and funding opportunities. Furthermore, the perceptions and societal culture towards entrepreneurs is negative as identified by entrepreneurs. Therefore, more recognition of the entrepreneurial success can change these perceptions. Also, including entrepreneurship in education programmes at an early stage can also support the entrepreneurship community and raises awareness about their role, making it more appealing for people to choose entrepreneurship as a career path. The link between the entrepreneurial community and policy makers is weak as mentioned by entrepreneurs. This also affects their role and perceptions towards them. Entrepreneurs need to be included in policy level decision making especially as they have the first-hand understanding of the challenges they face locally and regionally, especially that entrepreneurs look at their regional market as part of the local. The shared culture, values and language can help entrepreneurs reach beyond their local markets. This also introduces the potential of regional collaboration among entrepreneurs in the region as most of the entrepreneurship NGOs in Jordan work at the regional level. Regional collaboration and policy level facilitation can open new avenues for entrepreneurs and increases their success.

8.6   Further Research Opportunities

The empirical base of this study is entrepreneurs' perspective in a developing country. This study offers an understanding of the entrepreneurs' local and regional contexts and the role of training programmes is shaping their understanding. This offers a limitation and opportunities for further research. Further research might capture a deeper understanding and more dynamic relationship between entrepreneurs and their contexts in a different setting. Here a phenomenographic approach was used to capture the different understandings within a group of people in relation to a particular phenomenon, in this study the lived experience of entrepreneurs within their context. This approach presented a limited number of understandings according to phenomenography (Cope, 1997; Marton and Booth, 1997; Sandberg, 2000). In this study five qualitatively different understandings and experiences, this leaves the question open of whether all the possible understandings and experiences were captured. This can be related to the selected sample of entrepreneurs in this study. There

might be different understandings presented by different group of participants which I might have missed in this study. Further empirical investigation with a different group can therefore help confirm the findings of this study and the aspects of the framework.

Another side of this study that might require further investigation is how stable the understandings captured in this study are. Although previous research has showed evidence that understandings keep their essential meaning overtime (Dall'Alba and Sandberg, 2006), further research into understanding might offer more complex aspects over time. Although the essential meaning can stay the same, therefore, the complexity of understanding can change.

Another recommendation for a longitudinal approach to test the framework of entrepreneurship in developing country is also required. Context is an ever-changing construct. Therefore, further research to see how the emergent categories and themes might change over time, and how they influence activity is needed. This will improve the suggested framework and contribute to more dynamic findings.

8.6   Concluding Remarks

This study has investigated entrepreneurs' understanding and experience of context through the theoretical framework of analytical model of Marton and Booth's (1997). The body of knowledge capturing the variation of the entrepreneurs' understanding and experience of context is identified through an empirical phenomenographic study. The main research questions were: What is entrepreneurs understanding of their local context? How do entrepreneurs experience context of regional political instability? How did they experience context in entrepreneurship training programmes? The study investigated these questions from the entrepreneurs' perspective focusing on their understandings and experiences of their lived world.

The findings contribute to the field of research by: first, capturing the variation of the individual level understanding and experience of context. The variation in understanding and experience has introduced the entrepreneurs relations with their context and how they deal with contextual factors based on their knowledge, experience and understanding. Second, the study introduced the Entrepreneurs' context framework, which introduced the dynamic relations of how entrepreneurs own experience and understand is utilised to deal with contextual factors. Entrepreneurs demonstrated different abilities and behaviours in dealing with these understandings based on their experience, cumulative knowledge and learning abilities.

Consequently, by capturing the variability and idiosyncratic nature of contexts the research has introduced a structured approach to understanding of context that is distinct from the identified variables. This can be attributed to the interpretive research design of this study. Moving away from relational, dualistic and quantitative research and using phenomenography as a methodology has introduced new insights and frameworks of understanding

This study builds on the previous calls from Zahra et al. (2007; 2014), Welter (2011) and Bamberger (2015) to seek new insights and adopt new methodologies to understand the role of context and to theorize context. The field of entrepreneurship research is becoming more fragmented due to a lack of theorizing, as pointed out by Zahra et al. (2007). This study, therefore, has attempted to introduce a theorized understanding of context.

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