

# From production-oriented farming towards multifunctional entrepreneurship

Exploring the underlying learning process

Pieter Seuneke



# Propositions

1. The peripheral position often attributed to women in family farming is, in the case of developing multifunctional entrepreneurship, more of a strength than a weakness.  
(this thesis)
2. The development of multifunctional entrepreneurship in agriculture encompasses far more than the development of individual farmers' entrepreneurial skills.  
(this thesis)
3. Despite its current popularity, small scale urban food production is still highly undervalued for its contribution to urban resilience.
4. Even when they intend to use more participatory methods, many scientists still find it difficult to really involve stakeholders in their research projects.
5. One can get people out of 'the country', but it is more difficult to remove 'the country' from the people.
6. The popular television series 'Farmer Wants a Wife' goes beyond being an ordinary dating show.

Propositions belonging to the thesis, entitled:

'From production-oriented farming towards multifunctional entrepreneurship: exploring the underlying learning process'

Pieter Seuneke

Wageningen, 9 May 2014

# **From production-oriented farming towards multifunctional entrepreneurship**

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Pieter Seuneke

## **Thesis committee**

### **Promotor**

Prof. Dr J.S.C. Wiskerke  
Professor of Rural Sociology  
Wageningen University

### **Co-promotor**

Dr T. Lans  
Assistant professor, Education and Competence Studies Group  
Wageningen University

### **Other members**

Prof. Dr P.H. Feindt, Wageningen University  
Prof. Dr D. Rae, University of Lincoln, Lincoln, England, UK  
Prof. Dr S. Shortall, Queen's University, Belfast, Northern Ireland, UK  
Dr A.J. Visser, Applied Plant Research, Wageningen UR, Lelystad, NL

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# From production-oriented farming towards multifunctional entrepreneurship

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# Chapter 1

## General introduction



## 1. General introduction

### 1.1. Multifunctional agriculture

After World War II, European agriculture was intensively modernised to increase production volumes for food security through specialisation, intensification, scale enlargement and, in some sectors, a strong trend towards industrialisation (Ploeg and Roep, 2003). Although the modernisation process was very successful in achieving its initial aim of providing food self-sufficiency at the national/EU level, it led to serious environmental degradation and social concerns about food safety and animal welfare (Ploeg et al., 2002). Further to the adverse environmental and social effects of the modernisation process, farmers were faced with economic challenges. Large investments for more sustainable practices and increasing administrative requirements and land and labour prices all drove up farming costs, whilst ongoing globalisation led to decreasing returns on agricultural products. Ploeg and Roep (2003) described this process as ‘the squeeze on agriculture’.

During the past few decades, the environmental, social and economic crisis described above has urged many European farmers to re-orient themselves, moving away from the practices which they had previously taken for granted and developing new strategies. In The Netherlands, three main pathways can roughly be discerned (Ploeg, 2001). A first group of farmers have gradually become more reliant on off-farm income sources by combining primary production with a job outside the farm. A second group of farmers have tried to stay in business by focussing on further scale enlargement, specialisation and intensification of the primary production. A third group of farmers have diversified their enterprise by starting new non-farming business activities on their existing farm which generate new sources of income and fit better to the demands of modern society at large. Examples of these new activities are agro-tourism, nature and landscape management, the processing and selling of farm products and more recently in The Netherlands, professional (child) care and on-farm education.

This thesis focusses on this last group of farmers, namely those who combine the production of food and fibres with new non-farming business activities. This joint provision of agricultural products and other products and services has been defined as *multifunctional agriculture* (Vesala and Vesala,

2010; Wilson, 2008). Women play an important role in the development of multifunctional agriculture as they often initiate and lead the development of new business activities on farms (Bock, 2004; Brandth, 2002; McGehee et al., 2007).

Currently, many European farmers are 'multifunctional'. According to Eurostat (2013), in 2007 (most recent data), 10% of all European Union farmers were engaged in one or more non-farming income-generating activities. Countries with the highest percentages were 1) Finland with 28%, 2) France with 24% and 3) both Sweden and the United Kingdom with 23% of their farmers being involved in multifunctionality. In The Netherlands, 19% of the farms were involved in one or more 'gainful activity other than agricultural production' (Eurostat, 2013) and together, in 2010, generated an estimated turnover of 411 million Euros (Roest et al., 2010). Recently, the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs articulated its high ambitions in terms of multifunctional agriculture by publishing a 'knowledge, innovation and ambition agenda' which outlined an expected turnover of about one billion Euros for 2018 (Jong et al., 2013). This means more than a doubling of the turnover estimated by Roest et al. (2010). Besides economic importance, agricultural multifunctionality is also highly valued for other reasons; it represents an increase in opportunities for farmers to survive in modern agriculture (Ploeg et al., 2002), to increase farmers' job satisfaction (Veen et al., 2010) and to provide women with the opportunity to acquire a more equal position in family farming (Bock, 2004). It has furthermore been considered as contributing to the environmental and social sustainability of agriculture (Wilson, 2007a) as well as supporting the sustainable development of rural areas (Ploeg et al., 2002).

The following part of the introduction reviews the literature on agricultural entrepreneurship and multifunctionality and articulates the two overarching theoretical problems which forms the basis of this thesis.

## 1.2. Problem definition

The development of new (non-farming) business activities by farmers on their existing farms represents a transition from a production-oriented to a multifunctional model of agriculture (Burton and Wilson, 2006; Ploeg et al., 2002; Renting et al., 2009; Symes, 1991; Vesala and Vesala, 2010; Wilson, 2007a,



2008). Influential work conceptualising the transitions occurring on farm-level was done by Wilson<sup>1</sup> (2008) in whose paper it was argued that multifunctional farmers are actors driven by production- and multifunctional-oriented thought and action. Whereas production-oriented thought and action focus on the conventional production of food and fibres, multifunctional thought and action focus on generating new sources of income by developing new business activities which provide products and/or services which go beyond mass food production. The sum of both determines their particular multifunctional orientation and consequently the degree of farm-level multifunctionality in time (Wilson, 2008). As the identification, evaluation and pursuit of new business opportunities is fundamental to entrepreneurship, echoing a process perspective on entrepreneurship (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000), the shift towards multifunctionality increasingly requires farmers to develop their entrepreneurship (Alsos et al., 2003; Carter, 1998; Clark, 2009; Grande et al., 2011). Whilst used to operating as producers in a highly regulated and protected economic system, the development of new and *non-farming* business activities on their existing farms encourages farmers to re-orient, moving beyond the practices they have taken for granted and developing their entrepreneurial competence (McElwee et al., 2006; Morgan et al., 2010; Vesala and Vesala, 2010).

Due to the developments in agriculture and farmers' pursuit of new business opportunities, agricultural entrepreneurship has recently become an important field of study (Alsos et al., 2011). As entrepreneurship requires entrepreneurial skills, much of the literature on agricultural entrepreneurship is focussing on farmers' entrepreneurial skills (McElwee, 2005, 2006; McElwee et al., 2006; Morgan et al., 2010; Phelan and Sharpley, 2011; Pyysiäinen et al., 2006; Vesala and Pyysiäinen, 2008; Wolf et al., 2007; Wolf and Schoorlemmer, 2007). Much of this work has been part of or was related to the European research project 'Entrepreneurial Skills of Farmers' (ESoF)<sup>2</sup> which explored agricultural entrepreneurship in relation to different farming strategies and moreover identified three main entrepreneurial or 'higher-order' skills namely: 1) *recognising and realising business opportunities*, 2) *developing and evaluating a business strategy* and 3) *networking and utilising contacts* (Wolf and Schoorlemmer, 2007). These are key skills for farmers, regardless of their particular entrepreneurial strategies.

1 Wilson's (2008) paper on farm-level transitional pathways is one of the most cited papers published by the highly ranked Journal of Rural Studies (since 2008).

2 See [www.esofarmers.org](http://www.esofarmers.org)

Although the ESoF project, and its related publications, contributed greatly to our knowledge on agricultural entrepreneurship and farmers' skills, we still know surprisingly little about the *learning process* through which, in the case of this thesis, emerging multifunctional farmers develop their entrepreneurship and associated skills. The ESoF project covers farmers' learning only generally, stating that farmers develop their entrepreneurial skills predominantly through a process of 'learning-by-doing', and less so through formal education. It was argued that a change of perspectives is fundamental to learning and that it occurs particularly when farmers are being exposed to new ideas and different ways of doing things (Vesala and Pyysiäinen, 2008). In this regard, they also identified a number of factors which facilitate or hinder this process of changing perspectives (Vesala and Pyysiäinen, 2008).

Drawing specifically on the case of multifunctionality, this thesis aims to improve the understanding of the learning process underlying the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship. The term 'multifunctional entrepreneurship' is used because this thesis focusses on the development of entrepreneurship in the context of emerging multifunctionality. Multifunctional entrepreneurship unites these two processes. The development of this multifunctional entrepreneurship is approached as a process of *entrepreneurial learning* (Hamilton, 2011; Lans et al., 2008; Rae, 2006), which is defined in this study as the daily, work-related and 'situated' learning process through which emerging multifunctional farmers, and their families, acquire the identities, propensity, knowledge and skills needed to identify and develop new multifunctional businesses on their existing farms. Multifunctional agriculture provides a particularly interesting context in which to study the development of entrepreneurship as it is based on the development of activities which go beyond agriculture (Hassink et al., 2012; Haugen and Vik, 2008) and bring about profound changes in the work environment (Wilson, 2008) and gender relations (Bock, 2004) as well as particularly stimulating farmers to move beyond the practices they take for granted and develop their entrepreneurship (Morgan et al., 2010; Vesala and Vesala, 2010).

Apart from its value to the field of agricultural entrepreneurship, a better understanding of the entrepreneurial learning process is highly relevant to the work of conceptualising farm-level multifunctionality transitions (Sutherland et al., 2012; Wilson, 2008). Although Wilson's (2008) work contributed considerably to our understanding of individual farm-level multifunctionality pathways, it leaves some prominent avenues for further inquiry. Apart from empirical

testing (Sutherland et al., 2012), this work still needs more understanding about the internal and more intangible drivers that support farmers and their families in making the shift towards different degrees of farm-level multifunctionality. Wilson mentions drivers such as farmers' mental changes and the development of new identities towards multifunctionality (Burton and Wilson, 2006; Wilson, 2008) but does not refer explicitly to the *entrepreneurial learning process* (Rae, 2006) which in this thesis is seen as being at the core of developing stronger degrees of multifunctional thought and action. In other words, emerging multifunctional farmers and their families have to re-orient, moving from their former production-oriented roles and practices which they previously took for granted and finding their way towards becoming multifunctional entrepreneurs. Farmers' entrepreneurial learning processes which accompany the development of multifunctional activities can therefore be regarded as the actual 'motor' driving the shift towards multifunctional entrepreneurship behind the scenes.

Following the two theoretical problems defined above, this thesis aims to unravel entrepreneurial learning in multifunctional agriculture and seeks to understand how the process drives the development of farm-level multifunctionality. More specifically, it begins by examining the factors which can be seen as fostering and possibly hindering entrepreneurial learning. Secondly, as the social environment is important in fostering entrepreneurial learning (Hamilton, 2011; Rae, 2006), it aims to understand how different multifunctional-oriented farmers engage with their social environments and thus use these for learning. Thirdly, it continues by looking into the relationship between farmers' entrepreneurial learning and their changing work environments which increasingly stretch beyond the agricultural domain (Hassink et al., 2012) and represent different degrees of farm-level multifunctionality (Wilson, 2008). Fourth, it takes account of the genderedness of multifunctionality (Bock, 2004) in the context of the family farm (Jervell, 2011) by exploring women's and men's specific positions and roles in the entrepreneurial learning process.

This thesis will address these specific issues in its exploration of the entrepreneurial learning process. In doing so, the study aims to gain a better understanding about the development of entrepreneurship by emerging multifunctional farmers (Pyysiäinen et al., 2006) and to unveil the internal and more intangible drivers of farm-level multifunctionality (Wilson, 2008).

### 1.3. Research objective and questions

Based on the problem definition, the following research objective was formulated:

- *Unveiling and improving the understanding of the learning process underlying the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship as well as driving farm-level multifunctional transitional pathways.*

The research objective was broken down into the following research questions corresponding with the four studies which form the heart of this thesis:

1. Which major factors underlie entrepreneurial learning in the context of emerging farm-level multifunctionality? (**chapter two**)
2. What is the relationship between the specific form of multifunctional orientation and the nature of the social capital used for entrepreneurial learning? (**chapter three**)
3. What is the relationship between farmers' entrepreneurial learning and the development of the multifunctional farm as a learning environment? (**chapter four**)
4. What specific role do women play in the learning process underlying the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship in family farms? (**chapter five**)

### 1.4. Empirical basis: dynamics and robustness of Dutch multifunctional agriculture

This thesis draws on the empirical work done in the context of the Dutch research project 'Dynamics and Robustness of Multifunctional Agriculture'. The project was carried out by the Rural Sociology Group of Wageningen University between March 2009 and July 2011 and explored the *dynamics* and *robustness* of Dutch multifunctional agriculture on activity, farm and regional levels. Key questions were: how does multifunctional agriculture develop in The Netherlands (on activity, farm and regional levels) and to what extent does it provide a future for farmers and their families? The project was financed by the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation (currently the Ministry of Economic

Affairs) and supported by its ‘Taskforce’ on multifunctional agriculture. The Ministry installed the Taskforce in 2008 to further develop and professionalise Dutch multifunctional agriculture for a period of four years (Fischer et al., 2012).

In the following paragraphs, the three research phases of the project are described. How this thesis draws on the different phases of the project is described in table 1 and more detailed in the chapters themselves. Further details about the project, research phases and findings, moreover, can be found in the corresponding (Dutch) reports: phase one (Oostindie et al., 2011a), phase two (Oostindie et al., 2011b) and phase three (Seuneke and Lans, 2011). Relevant too is the (Dutch) weblog which was maintained throughout the project (<http://multifunctionelelandbouw.wordpress.com/>).

**Table 1:** The relation between the overarching research project and this thesis

Research phase 'Dynamics and Robustness of Multifunctional Agriculture'	Thesis / chapters / research question (RQ)
<p>(1) <b>State-of-the-art-analysis:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Literature review</li> <li>• Identifying the main challenges and opportunities of multifunctional agriculture</li> </ul>	- Theoretical background thesis
<p>(2) <b>Exploring the dynamics and robustness of multifunctional agriculture:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 120 interviews in six different regions</li> <li>• Structured questionnaire (see Appendix 2)</li> </ul>	- Empirical background thesis - Chapter 3 (RQ2)
<p>(3) <b>Exploring entrepreneurial learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 18 in-depth interviews (drawn from N=120)</li> <li>• 9 'weak' and 9 'strong' multifunctional farm cases</li> <li>• Semi-structured questionnaire (see Appendix 3)</li> </ul>	- Chapter 2 (RQ1) - Chapter 4 (RQ3) - Chapter 5 (RQ4)

### 1.4.1. Phase one: state-of-the-art-analysis

*(March – November 2009)*

In the first phase of the project, an elaborate literature review was carried out covering international as well as national research relevant to the dynamics and robustness of (Dutch) multifunctional agriculture. The first phase was an important basis shaping the dynamics and robustness project.

Aside from an analysis identifying the main opportunities and challenges of Dutch multifunctional agriculture on activity, farm and regional levels (Oostindie et al., 2011a), this phase mainly aimed to 'fine-tune' the focus of the research project. The (preliminary) outcomes of the state-of-the-art-analysis were tested

by discussing them with several researchers working on multifunctionality in The Netherlands, within and outside Wageningen University and Research Centre. A number of colleagues from the different Wageningen research institutes (e.g. Alterra, the Agricultural Economics Research Institute, Applied Plant Research etc.) were consulted in person. The state-of-the-art-analysis demonstrated that in The Netherlands, recent research on multifunctionality mainly focussed on activity-level dynamics and robustness (Oostindie et al., 2011a). However, to really understand the dynamics and robustness of multifunctionality, a farm-level focus was seen as necessary. Next to the 'activity' and 'region', 'the farm' therefore became an important level of analysis in the research project.

Apart from its primary research activities, the dynamics and robustness project included a number of expert meetings and seminars to test (preliminary) outcomes, generate new insights, and disseminate findings, as well as to build an (inter)national expert network on multifunctionality. The returning expert meetings were held with a changing group of researchers and practitioners (such as information brokers, teachers, advisers) working on multifunctional agriculture in The Netherlands. In the first phase, three of such meetings were organised; one national expert meeting discussing the 'societal relevance of multifunctionality', an expert meeting exploring 'experiences from abroad' with colleague researchers from different European countries followed by, on the same day, a mini-symposium to share and discuss the international experiences with a broader audience.

#### **1.4.2. Phase two: exploring the dynamics and robustness of multifunctional agriculture**

*(December 2009 – July 2010)*

The second phase formed the main (empirical) part of the research project. To explore the dynamics and robustness of multifunctional agriculture on activity, farm and regional levels, structured interviews were undertaken with the owner-managers (men and women) of 120 multifunctional farms<sup>3</sup>. The interviews aimed to collect quantitative data through a structured questionnaire. However, by (audio) recording the interviews, additional and more qualitative motivations, life stories and other relevant remarks were also captured. The questionnaire used in the interviews consisted of twenty-two structured questions (fill-in questions

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<sup>3</sup> The empirical work was mainly carried out by the author of this thesis together with Els Hegger, a colleague researcher from the Rural Sociology Group of Wageningen University.

and matrices using Likert scales) focussing on various topics including personal and farm characteristics, multifunctional activities, motivations to start new activities, farm development, investments, and the importance of cooperation and learning. The structured questionnaire central in the interviews is attached to this thesis (see Appendix 2).

As the development of multifunctionality cannot be understood without relating to its geographical context (Wilson, 2007b, 2008), the project included a regional focus. The farms were therefore selected in six different parts of the country (twenty in each of them) (see figure 1).

1. Het Groene Woud  
(in the province of Noord-Brabant)
2. The province of Flevoland
3. Laag Holland (in Noord-Holland)
4. Walcheren (in Zeeland)
5. De Noordelijke Friese Wouden  
(in Friesland)
6. De Wolden (in Drenthe)



Figure 1: The location of the six research areas in The Netherlands (drawn from Oostindie et al. (2011b) .

The regions were selected as they differed in terms of the prevailing agricultural production systems (e.g. dairy farming, arable agriculture, horticulture, and mixed farming systems), the kind of non-agricultural on-farm activities (e.g. agro-tourism, nature and landscape management and (child)care) and their urban proximity. Furthermore, agricultural and rural development in these regions had been subject to explorations before. The prior research experiences and the existing research material enabled us to build on earlier insights and to better contextualise the findings of the 120 interviews carried out in this phase. More details about the dynamics and robustness of multifunctional agriculture in the six regions see Oostindie et al. (2011b).

Potential respondents in the regions had to be identified on various ways as sampling frames did not exist. They were located through internet searches, experiences from prior research, consulting informants (such as development workers, consultants, researchers), relevant documents (such as earlier research done) and during the fieldwork itself by exploring the area and asking respondents for suggestions ('the snowball method' (Kumar, 2011)).

Farms were selected if they were engaged, next to the primary production, in one or more of the multifunctional activities defined by the Ministry's Taskforce on Multifunctional Agriculture (see table 2). There was no selection on the type of primary production such as arable, dairy, pig farming, calf rearing, fruit growing etc. However, as the project was interested in the relation of multifunctionality with the primary production, the farms still had to be producing to a certain extent; 'hobby farmers' were therefore not included.

**Table 2:** Multifunctional activities central in the research project

Multifunctional activity	Examples
Nature and landscape management	Meadow bird protection, maintaining hedgerows, field margins etc. <sup>4</sup>
High quality produce	Production of regional, artisanal, home-made products
Developing short (producer-consumer) supply chains	Farm and web shops, farmers' markets, vegetable boxes schemes
Agro-tourism	Lodging such as bed & breakfasts, campsites and day-activities such as farmers' games, rural/farmers' skills, boat rentals etc.
Integrated care farming	Providing (day)care for the elderly, disabled, youth offenders, those with addition problems etc.
Integrated childcare	Providing day/preschool childcare
On-farm education	Using the farm as a learning environment for school children to learn about food production and farming

To fulfil the desired sample of 120 farms, 191 potential respondents had to be contacted. Most interviews were held with individual farmers. Whether the interviews were held with men, women or the couple was mainly decided by the respondents themselves, based on the role division on the family farm and their interest in taking part in the research.

The sample included a diversity of farms in terms of experience with new business activities and degrees of farm-level multifunctionality (weak – strong) (Wilson, 2008) and represents different combinations of production and multifunctional-oriented activities, throughout the country. The sample is described in detail in chapter three of this thesis (see 3.4.1.).

As entrepreneurial learning is a highly embedded and situated phenomenon (Hamilton, 2011; Rae, 2006), it can only be understood in

<sup>4</sup> 'Nature and landscape management' was considered as an activity very close to the primary production, farms engaged in this activity were therefore only selected when they were combined with one or more, of the other activities in table 2.



combination with the social and cultural context in which it occurs. The detailed information generated during this phase about the farms and the regions in which they are located therefore forms an important basis for understanding the learning studied in this thesis. Chapter three, however, draws on the findings of this phase more specifically by using the questionnaire items on learning directly.

The research phase was closed with an expert meeting entitled ‘future research on multifunctional agriculture’. Together with the expert group, the main findings were discussed and a research agenda for future research on multifunctionality was composed.

### **1.4.3. Phase three: exploring entrepreneurial learning**

*(August 2010 – July 2011)*

The third and final phase focussed on the learning process underlying the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship. As chapters two, four and five draw on the data collected in this phase directly (see table 1), it forms the most important empirical basis for this thesis.

The objective of this research phase was to deepen the understandings of the learning process underlying the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship and to better understand how the learning process is connected with the development of farm-level multifunctionality (Wilson, 2008). For the purpose of this study, additional in-depth interviews were held among eighteen of the 120 cases from phase two. To be able to examine the interaction between learning and the dynamics of the farm’s multifunctionality, nine ‘weakly’ and nine ‘strongly’ multifunctional farm cases were selected representing different work and learning contexts (Wilson, 2008). Carrying out in-depth interviews among the earlier respondents was the only way to unveil entrepreneurial learning given that this type of work-related learning is highly embedded in daily working processes and moreover is often not recognised and labelled as such by respondents (Eraut, 2004).

The interviews were undertaken in March 2011 and, like the ones from phase two, took place on respondents’ farms. For continuity, the same family members were interviewed again. The semi-structured questionnaire used in the interviews focussed on entrepreneurial learning in close connection to its context, namely the development of farm-level multifunctionality. The questions stimulated the respondents to reflect on the present, past and future development of four major themes. The translated questionnaire is attached to this thesis (see Appendix 3). All interviews were audio-recorded.

In addition to the primary research activities in this phase, the researchers collaborated with parties from the Dutch agricultural education institutes to organise a symposium on the position of multifunctional entrepreneurship in agricultural education. The symposium clearly demonstrated that multifunctionality is not by everyone seen as a serious alternative farming strategy and therefore lacks a clear position in the agricultural curricula. Some additional interviews held among teachers by a colleague researcher working for the Dutch Agricultural Economics Research Institute (LEI) confirmed this image.

Finally, the project ‘Dynamics and Robustness of Multifunctional Agriculture’ was closed with a national conference on multifunctional agriculture. Together with around a hundred participants from research and practice, the findings of the project were discussed and, over the course of different thematic parallel sessions, research agendas for the future set.

## 1.5. Ethical remarks: consent and confidentiality

The empirical part of the dynamics and robustness research project, and therefore this thesis, fully draws on personal information provided by the interviewed farmers. Some ethical remarks with regard to the involvement of participants should therefore be made here. It needs mentioning that all farmers participated after having explicitly given their informed consent (Kumar, 2011). On requesting their cooperation and again before starting the actual interview, the respondents were well informed about the purpose of the investigation, what they were required to do in order to take part, the type of information sought after, the method of recording and the actual use of the gathered data. Naturally, as the research deals with personal and confidential information, anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed.

## 1.6. Thesis structure

This thesis consists of six chapters. After this introduction, the four core chapters will present those studies from which findings answer the four research questions central in this thesis (see 1.3.).

Guided by Rae's (2006) framework, chapter two first of all reports on a study exploring the concept of entrepreneurial learning in multifunctional agriculture in general. The study of six different multifunctional farms moreover identifies a number of main factors which can be seen as driving the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship. Chapter two answers research question one.

As social participation and interaction play a crucial role in fostering entrepreneurial learning (Rae, 2006), chapter three deepens the understandings of the concept by examining farmers' use of social capital. More specifically, the chapter explores how farmers with different multifunctional orientations employ different kinds of social capital in the process of learning in order to move towards multifunctional entrepreneurship. Chapter three answers research question two.

Chapter four explores entrepreneurial learning as a work-related (Lans et al., 2008) and socially situated phenomenon (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Comparing 'weak' and 'strong' multifunctional farm cases (Wilson, 2008), representing different work conditions and environments, this chapter explores the interaction between entrepreneurial learning and the dynamics of the work environment as a site of learning. The main findings of this chapter answer research question three.

As women play a crucial role in the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship on family farms (Bock, 2004; McGehee et al., 2007), chapter five employs Rae's (2006) framework of entrepreneurial learning from a gendered perspective. Women's specific role is revealed in a detailed analysis of the genderedness of entrepreneurial learning in three farm cases. Chapter five answers research question four.

Chapter six, finally, summarises the main findings of the four studies and answers the four corresponding research questions. The chapter then elaborates how this thesis contributes to the research problems central to this study: 1) the need for a better understanding of the learning process underlying the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship and 2) the internal and intangible drivers of farm-level multifunctionality (see 1.2.). The chapter and thesis is closed with methodological reflections, avenues and recommendations for further research and thoughts on how to foster the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship among future and current multifunctional farmers.

The structure of this thesis is summarised and visualised by figure 2.

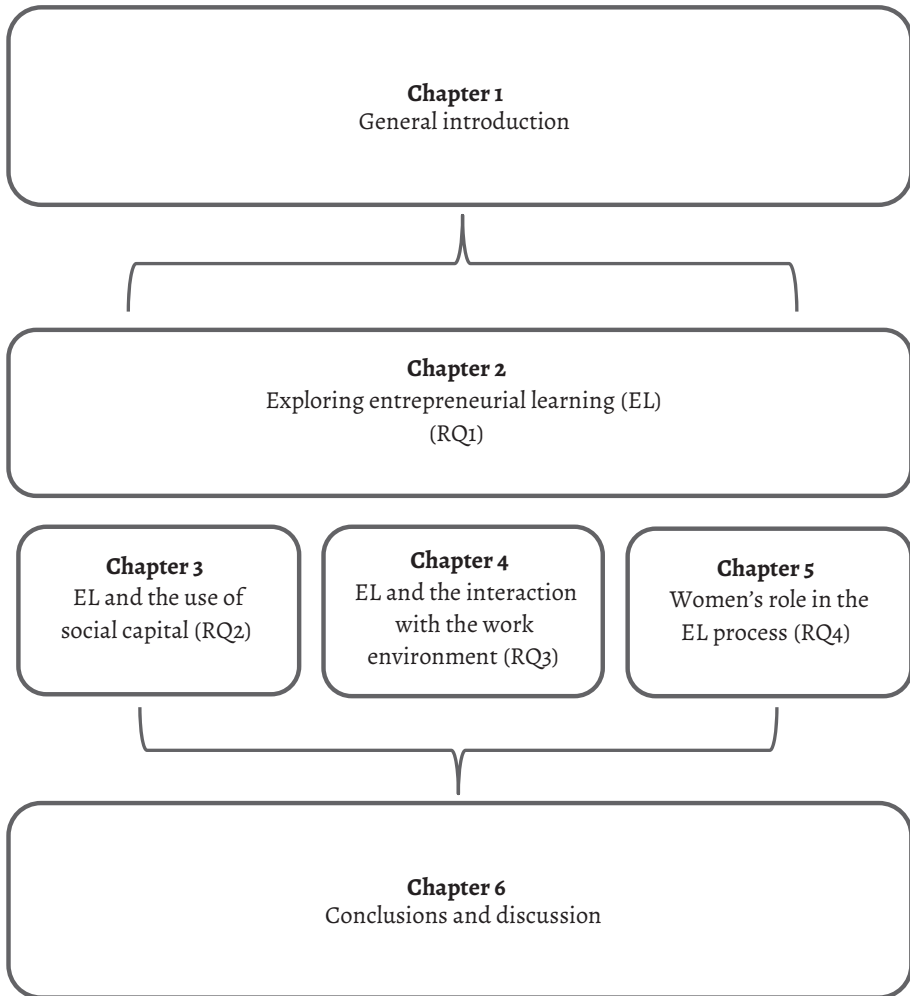


Figure 2: Thesis structure; chapters, focus and research questions (RQ).





A black and white photograph of a river with reeds and people in the foreground. The river flows from the top left towards the bottom right. In the foreground, the heads and shoulders of several people are visible, looking towards the water. The background shows a line of trees and a fence under a bright sky.

## Chapter 2

**Moving beyond  
entrepreneurial skills:  
key factors driving  
entrepreneurial learning in  
multifunctional agriculture**





## 2. Moving beyond entrepreneurial skills: key factors driving entrepreneurial learning in multifunctional agriculture

### Abstract

It is widely acknowledged that, next to sound craftsmanship and management, farmers increasingly need entrepreneurship if they are to survive in modern agriculture. This is reflected by an increasing number of studies focussing on entrepreneurship in agriculture. While much work in this comprehensive body of literature focusses on entrepreneurial skills, relatively little attention has been paid to the learning process leading to the development of these skills. This chapter therefore explores that learning process and focusses on the context of multifunctional agriculture. Our investigation was guided by the recently developed concept of *entrepreneurial learning* and particularly focussed on finding out which factors underlie the entrepreneurial learning process in this specific context. Empirical work done in six different multifunctional farms in The Netherlands revealed three major factors driving entrepreneurial learning: 1) *re-developing an entrepreneurial identity*, 2) *crossing the boundaries of agriculture* and 3) *opening up the family farm*. Crucial to understanding these factors is the challenging process of transition from production-oriented to multifunctional farming. A perceived productivist norm, created by decades of post-war agricultural modernisation, was found to make entrepreneurial learning in this context far from self-evident. This chapter contributes by bringing the entrepreneurial learning process to light and demonstrating its complexity in a specific context. Based on our findings, we argue that the debate on entrepreneurship in agriculture needs to move beyond its current focus on entrepreneurial skills. The concept of entrepreneurial learning provides a useful framework in this respect. Further to its theoretical relevance, this study ultimately supports practitioners in finding inroads into fostering entrepreneurship in multifunctional agriculture.

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## 2.1. Introduction

The environmental, social and economic crisis in agriculture, as described in section 1.1., is urging farmers to look for new strategies and sources of income. One of the strategies still followed by many farmers is to develop new income-generating (non-farming) business activities on their existing farms. Farmers engaging in this process have increasingly been recognised as becoming more entrepreneurial (Alsos et al., 2011; Carter, 1998; Grande, 2011; Haugen and Vik, 2008; Jervell, 2011; McElwee, 2006, 2008; Morgan et al., 2010; Vesala and Vesala, 2010). However, it is important to stress that non-agricultural business start-ups represent only one among various strategies available to farmers to become more entrepreneurial. It has been argued that conventional production-oriented farming also provides entrepreneurial opportunities (Vesala and Pyysiäinen, 2008). Nonetheless, the development of new non-farming businesses particularly challenges farmers to re-orient, moving beyond the practices they may take for granted and developing entrepreneurial skills (Morgan et al., 2010).

The development of new non-farming business activities by farmers is also described as a transition from a productivist to a non-productivist, or multifunctional, model of agriculture (Wilson, 2007a, 2008). In productivist agriculture, the farmer's main role is to produce food. In non-productivist, or multifunctional agriculture, farmers take on a broader role by providing additional products and/or services which are better fitted to the demands of society at large (Wilson, 2007a).

Many studies focussing on the development of multifunctionality in agriculture have demonstrated that this transition is far from self-evident (Alsos and Carter, 2006; Brandth and Haugen, 2011; Burton and Wilson, 2006; Pyysiäinen et al., 2006; Ward, 1993; Wilson, 2008). The inheritance of the post-war agricultural modernisation process is seen as playing an important role in this respect. After decades of modernisation, farmers became locked in a highly specialised socio-cultural, technical and economical regime mainly focussed on the maximisation of production (Ward, 1993).

Important regarding the development of entrepreneurship is the economic context in which farmers have operated. Instead of being entrepreneurs in a free market, farmers were producers in a highly regulated and protected economic system (Potter and Tilzey, 2005). With regard to learning, we must furthermore point at the strongly production-oriented agricultural

knowledge system which has developed. In The Netherlands, agricultural modernisation was powered by an elaborate knowledge system known as the REE-triptych (Research, Extension and Education) (Wals et al., 2012). The REE-triptych implemented a one-size-fits-all modernisation agenda, developed by agricultural research, through an elaborate government extension service and a separate agricultural education system. The agenda was strongly production-oriented and was seen as largely neglecting the diversity of Dutch agriculture (Ploeg, 1994). The post-war modernisation process was very successful in creating highly productive agriculture, yet by creating a protected market and dictating a one-size-fits-all modernisation agenda, it did not particularly stimulate innovative and entrepreneurial behaviour.

Burton and Wilson (2006) demonstrated that breaking out of the productivist regime is a challenging process. In their work on farmers' identities, the authors demonstrated that although farmers have developed many other activities, their self-conceptualisations are often still deeply rooted in productivist thinking. These findings challenge the assumption that the transition from a production-oriented to a more multifunctional agriculture is actually taking place: only if farmers themselves assume more multifunctional self-concepts, can it be assumed that agriculture is moving away from productivist towards a more multifunctional agriculture (Burton and Wilson, 2006).

The agricultural crises and farmers' adaptive behaviours have resulted in an increased attention for entrepreneurship in agriculture (Alsos et al., 2011). In the comprehensive body of literature on the subject, much attention has been paid to farmers' entrepreneurial skills (McElwee, 2005, 2006; McElwee et al., 2006; Morgan et al., 2010; Phelan and Sharpley, 2011; Pyysiäinen et al., 2006; Vesala and Pyysiäinen, 2008; Wolf et al., 2007; Wolf and Schoorlemmer, 2007). Much of this work was related to the European research project Entrepreneurial Skills of Farmers (ESoF) to which was referred to in the introduction of this thesis (see 1.2.)<sup>5</sup>.

It has been demonstrated that the development of the entrepreneurial skills required to start new non-farming businesses represents a challenging process. In a research paper related to the ESoF project, Pyysiäinen et al. (2006) illustrate that farmers' acquired skills are highly specialised and context dependent. They argue that post-war agricultural modernisation led to farmers strongly adapting their skills to a production-oriented and economically regulated

<sup>5</sup> See [www.esofarmers.org](http://www.esofarmers.org)

context. Whilst farmers' acquired skills suit their former production-oriented and protected context, they are inadequate for the successful development of new non-farming businesses (Pyysiäinen et al., 2006).

The relevance of this chapter is based on the fact that the work on entrepreneurship in agriculture has primarily been focussing on farmers' entrepreneurial skills. Until now, the underlying learning process leading to the development of these entrepreneurial skills has hardly been explored. Despite the comprehensive work which has been done on entrepreneurial skills in agriculture (e.g. in the context of the ESoF project), many questions still remain regarding the underlying learning process. Bringing the entrepreneurial learning process of farmers to light, therefore, provides a major opportunity for the field of agricultural entrepreneurship.

Aiming to contribute to filling this gap in the literature, this study explores the learning process underlying the development of entrepreneurial skills in agriculture. By studying farmers who started new non-farming businesses on their existing farms, we focus on the learning processes occurring in the context of multifunctional agriculture. Our investigation is guided by the recently developed concept of *entrepreneurial learning* (Cope, 2005; Hamilton, 2011; Minniti and Bygrave, 2001; Politis, 2005; Rae, 2006), and particularly aimed at identifying the main factors underlying the entrepreneurial learning process in this specific context. The following research question leads this study:

*Which major factors underlie entrepreneurial learning in the context of emerging farm-level multifunctionality?*

Generating a greater understanding about the entrepreneurial learning process is highly relevant with regard to the increasing need for entrepreneurship in agriculture. By bringing the entrepreneurial learning process to light, this chapter furthermore aims to provide starting points for further research and more tailored support and education programmes which take the complexity of entrepreneurial learning in agriculture into account.

The remainder of this chapter is structured as follows. We first present our theoretical framework by elaborating on the context of our study and discussing the concept of entrepreneurial learning. The following section describes the empirical basis of this study and elaborates on the collection and analysis of the data. A considerable part of the chapter is devoted to the

presentation of our main findings. The chapter closes by drawing out and discussing the main conclusions and by proposing some possible avenues for further research.

## 2.2. Theoretical framework

### 2.2.1. Multifunctional farmers as portfolio entrepreneurs

In this study, we consider the development of new and non-farming business activities by farmers as a form of portfolio entrepreneurship (Carter, 1998, 2001; Carter and Ram, 2003). Carter (1998) was one of the first scholars to use the concept of portfolio entrepreneurship in the context of agriculture. Multifunctional farmers are considered portfolio entrepreneurs as they simultaneously own and develop multiple businesses, which is seen as the main characteristic of portfolio entrepreneurship (Carter, 1998).

Compared to their novice counterparts, portfolio entrepreneurs are generally considered to be more highly advantaged. They have an initial resource base at their disposal and have already experienced starting and running a business (Westhead et al., 2005). Farmers also have access to many useful physical, human and social resources which are often required to start new businesses. The assumption of the advantaged position of portfolio entrepreneurs has also been criticised, however. Work focussing on the transfer of resources among businesses, for instance, demonstrated that existing resources can also be a threat to the development of new businesses (Mosakowski, 2002; Starr and Bygrave, 1992). Starr and Bygrave (1992) pointed to the context dependency of existing resources: whilst some are appropriate in one context, they may be highly inappropriate to another. Particularly relevant in the context of this study are the liabilities of certain human and social resources as the development of a new venture may suffer from overconfidence and the use of inappropriate social networks (Starr and Bygrave, 1992).

Comparable conclusions were drawn in agriculture (Alsos and Carter, 2006; McElwee et al., 2006; Pyysiäinen et al., 2006). Studying Norwegian multifunctional farmers, Alsos and Carter (2006) demonstrated that whereas physical resources (such as buildings) enhanced the profitability of farmers' new ventures, the transfer of human and social resources (such as knowledge, skills or networks) reduced it. These studies all point at the inheritance of

post-war production-oriented agricultural modernisation. Over decades of modernisation, farmers' knowledge, skills and networks have become highly adapted to a production-oriented and economically regulated context. The resources acquired by farmers therefore suit their production-oriented activities but are highly inadequate for setting up and developing new non-farming businesses (Pyysiäinen et al., 2006). Moreover, production-oriented farmers were argued to have a propensity to overestimate their competence regarding the development of new business activities, relying overly on their acquired experiences, skills and networks and consequently paying insufficient attention to entrepreneurial learning (Alsos and Carter, 2006).

### **2.2.2. Contextualising the development of portfolio businesses as a farm-level transition from production-oriented to multifunctional farming**

The farmers studied in this chapter are creating portfolio businesses in the specific context of the transition from production-oriented to multifunctional farming (Wilson, 2007a, 2008). Wilson's (2008) normative conceptualisation of farm-level multifunctional pathways provides a useful framework to understand the development of on-farm multifunctionality.

Wilson conceptualised the development of on-farm multifunctionality as a spectrum bound by production-oriented and non-production or multifunctional thought and action. Whereas production-oriented thought and action focus on the production of food and fibres, non-production-oriented or multifunctional thought and action focus on generating new sources of income by developing new businesses. Examples are agro-tourism, (child)care, short producer-consumer supply chains and so on. Wilson argues that in the development of their farms, farmers are driven by a combination of productivist and non-productivist thought and action. The sum of both determines their multifunctional orientation and the degree of on-farm multifunctionality (Wilson, 2008).

Wilson's (2008) work on farm-level multifunctionality emphasises the diversity and dynamics of farms' transitional pathways. Farmers' multifunctional thought and action, and consequently the development and degree of on-farm multifunctionality, is not a linear but rather an inconsistent and highly dynamic process. A complex interplay between case-specific enabling and limiting factors determines the farm's transitional potential and

the degree of the farmer's multifunctional thought and action in time (Wilson, 2008).

Important factors regarding the focus of this study are primarily factors such as gender, age, education level, values, skills, prior experience and social background. Women, for instance, play an important role in the start-up of new business activities in agriculture and moreover were found to shape entrepreneurship differently than men (Bock, 2004). Carter (1998) found, too, that younger and more highly educated farmers have a particularly strong propensity to develop new on-farm businesses.

Farmers do not operate in a vacuum when developing their businesses. Literature shows that the social environment plays a key role regarding the development of farm-level multifunctionality. Farmers operating in multifunctional-minded social environments will have stronger multifunctional identities, which in turn will positively affect their agency towards the development of multifunctionality (Burton and Wilson, 2006; Vesala and Vesala, 2010). At the same time, farmers will be challenged by decades of productivist action and thought. Burton and Wilson (2006) found that despite their engagement with many other activities, their identities are still deeply rooted in productivist thinking.

Another important factor in the understanding of farmers' multifunctional thought and action is the family farm context. Most farms are family owned, managed and passed through from parents to their sons and daughters. Therefore, the specific characteristics and dynamics of the family farm, such as the cycle of family life, culture, logics, routines and successional patterns and perspectives all play an important role with regard to the development of on-farm multifunctionality (Gasson et al., 1988; Jervell, 2011). Farming families are, for instance, less driven by ideas of growth and profit maximisation. Instead, higher priority is given to survival, preserving family heritage, autonomy, rural life-style and passing a healthy farm on to the next generation (Gasson et al., 1988). Moreover, it was argued that a small and homogeneous community, the presence of older generations and a conservative mentality are not particularly conducive to stimulating change and innovative thinking (Jervell, 2011). From a transitional perspective, farmers deal with 'system memory'. After years of parental production-oriented thought and action, successors are likely to face challenges if attempting to push the farm towards a stronger degree of multifunctionality (Wilson, 2008).

Furthermore, the characteristics of the existing farm are also important in forming the basis for the new businesses. Relevant are factors such as farm size, ownership and the existing production-oriented basis. The existing agricultural production, for instance, entails specific opportunities and restrictions to the development of new business activities (Wilson, 2008). Labour intensive, less accessible and attractive animal production systems may for instance have their specific restrictions towards the development of new activities. A dairy farm will be more accessible and attractive than an intensive pig farm in terms of its smell and strict hygiene protocols. In other words, the productivist path dependencies may deter strongly multifunctional-oriented farmers from actually developing specific businesses and strong degrees of farm-level multifunctionality (Wilson, 2008).

Finally, there are some studies pointing at the importance of the farm's geographical location for the development of multifunctionality. The development of on-farm multifunctionality is greatly affected by the geographical, environmental, social, institutional, cultural and economic conditions of the specific region (Morgan et al., 2010; Wilson, 2007b, 2008). Farmers operating in attractive regions close to urbanised areas with well-organised institutional landscapes have more opportunities than those operating in less favourable contexts.

### **2.2.3. Entrepreneurial learning**

The development of entrepreneurship by the farmers studied for this chapter is approached from a learning perspective. We draw particularly on the concept of entrepreneurial learning (Cope, 2005; Deakins and Freel, 1998; Dutta and Crossan, 2005; Minniti and Bygrave, 2001; Politis, 2005; Rae, 2006), a concept which is drawn from general small business entrepreneurship literature and forms the central lens of this study.

In the comprehensive work done on entrepreneurial learning, two main approaches can be distinguished: an individual-cognitive and a more socially-situated perspective on entrepreneurial learning. The earlier studies can be placed in the first category. Building on Kolb's (1984) understandings of experiential learning, these studies theorised entrepreneurial learning predominantly as an individual and cognitive process taking place in the entrepreneur's head (Cope, 2003; Corbett, 2005; Deakins and Freel, 1998; Rae and Carswell, 2000).

More recently, entrepreneurial learning has increasingly been approached as a more situated phenomenon, embedded and influenced by



the social dynamics of the entrepreneur's work environment<sup>6</sup> (Hamilton, 2011; Karataş-Özkan, 2011; Lans et al., 2008; Lans et al., 2004; Rae, 2006). These studies are strongly rooted in Lave and Wenger's (1991) notion of 'situated learning', which argues that learning is fundamentally a social process and not just something happening in the learner's head.

In our study, we take this more situated perspective on entrepreneurial learning as the point of departure and employ the framework developed by Rae (2006)<sup>7</sup>. We used this particular framework because it captures the complexity of the process by tying together the cognitive and social dimensions of entrepreneurial learning put forward in literature. Moreover, Rae's framework suits our study because he also focusses on the context of emerging entrepreneurship, although in technology-based enterprises.

In his paper, Rae (2006) provides an elaborate definition of entrepreneurial learning, based on the following five understandings (p. 42):

- Entrepreneurial learning is a dynamic process of awareness, reflection, association and application that involves transforming experience and knowledge into functional learning outcomes (Cope and Watts, 2000).
- It comprises knowledge, behaviour and affective or emotional learning (Cope, 2005).
- It is affected by the context in which learning occurs and it includes the content of what is learned as well as the processes through which learning takes place (Politis, 2005).
- It is both individual, with personal differences in ability producing different learning outcomes, as well as social and organisational (Corbett, 2005).
- Finally, there are close connections between the processes of entrepreneurial learning and of opportunity recognition, exploitation, creativity and innovation (Lumpkin and Lichtenstein, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> In the context of small and medium sized enterprises, the work environment goes beyond the physical boundaries of the firm, covering the entire arena in which entrepreneurs operate (Rae, 2006).

<sup>7</sup> Rae's (2006) framework is also explicitly used in chapter five of this thesis which examines the specific role of farm women towards the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship in family farms.

Rae's (2006) framework of entrepreneurial learning consists of three major themes: 1) *personal and social emergence of entrepreneurial identity*, 2) *contextual learning* and 3) *the negotiated enterprise*. We shall briefly summarise the three themes<sup>8</sup> below.

The first theme is the *personal and social emergence of entrepreneurial identity*. This theme refers to the idea that the development of an entrepreneurial identity is a profound aspect of becoming an entrepreneur: "simply acquiring entrepreneurial skills and knowledge is not sufficient; the person who begins to act as an entrepreneur is assuming the identity of an entrepreneur" (Rae, 2006, p. 45). People develop their identities by re-negotiating their self-conceptualisations in relation to others and through interactions with their social environment.

The second theme, *contextual learning*, emphasises the importance of social participation for entrepreneurial learning. Rae (2006) describes this as follows: "contextual learning includes social participation in community, industry and other networks through which individual experiences are related and compared, and shared meaning is constructed. Through situated experience and social relationships people learn intuitively and may develop the ability to recognise opportunities" (p. 47).

Third, *the negotiated enterprise* refers to the negotiated relationships entrepreneurs have with actors in the work environment and the learning which emerges from these. Here, the engagement of others is seen as an aspect vital to the development of a new venture: "a new business venture is not enacted by one person alone, but is dependent on the outcome of negotiated relationship with other parties. The ideas and aspirations of individuals are realised through interactive processes of exchange with others within and around the enterprise" (Rae, 2006, p. 49).

In short, in this study we consider multifunctional farmers as emerging portfolio entrepreneurs. By developing new businesses on their existing farms, farmers do not only become more entrepreneurial, but also develop more multifunctional ways of farming. The transition from productivist to multifunctional models of agriculture is furthermore considered as an important background to this study. Finally, the development of the entrepreneurial skills required for the farmer's new role in agriculture is explored using the concept of entrepreneurial learning, this being the core of our theoretical framework.

<sup>8</sup> The three themes are rooted in understandings from various scientific domains. For an elaborate overview of the theoretical basis, see Rae (2006, p. 44).

## 2.3. Method

This study is based on work done in a Dutch research project exploring the ‘dynamics and robustness’ of multifunctional agriculture in The Netherlands. In this project, 120 multifunctional farmers were interviewed, being involved in various combinations of production-oriented and multifunctional activities, located throughout the country<sup>9</sup>. In a second phase of the project, additional in-depth interviews were held with a selection of the cases in order to deepen our understandings of the process of farmers’ entrepreneurial learning. This chapter focusses on six of these cases.

### 2.3.1. Cases

The six cases studied in this chapter were selected as they provided rich data to examine entrepreneurial learning in different contexts. The cases approach the diversity of multifunctionality in The Netherlands: farmers are engaged in common production-oriented and multifunctional activities and their farms are located throughout the country. Different development phases and degrees of multifunctionality are moreover represented. Finally, all cases are family farms, being owned and managed by and passed on through the family (Gasson et al., 1988). Table 3 presents a summary of the studied cases. For a more elaborate case overview, see Appendix 1.

### 2.3.2. Additional in-depth interviews

The main sources of data used for this study were the additional in-depth interviews held with the farmers of the six cases. Our findings from the earlier interviews, carried out in the overarching research project (see Oostindie et al. (2011b) and chapter three of this thesis), were used to contextualise entrepreneurial learning. The information which was already available about the development and characteristics of the farm, the farmer’s work environment and activities, provided a valuable background to the understanding of learning in the studied cases.

The interviews were undertaken in March 2011 and, like the earlier interviews mentioned above, took place on respondents’ farms. Which family member was interviewed, was mainly decided by the respondents themselves. Main respondents were often those leading the development of the multifunctional activities.

<sup>9</sup> For more details about the research project, see Oostindie et al. (2011b) and chapter one of this thesis.

**Table 3:** Studied cases: names of respondents, age, production-oriented and multifunctional activities (March 2011)

Case	Name <sup>a</sup>	Age	Production-oriented activities	Multifunctional activities <sup>b</sup> (since)
A	Jack	50s	- Fruit growing (cherries, apples and pears)	- <b>Farm shop (1999)</b>
B	Anne and Peter	40s	- Switching from dairy farming to cattle breeding	- Landscape and nature management (1989) - <b>Agro-tourism (farm games) (2003)</b> - Small farm shop (non-food) (2004)
C	Mark	40s	- Dairy farming	- Farm education (2003) - <b>Childcare (2007)</b>
D	Sarah	40s	- Pig farming - Tree nursery	- Farm education (stopping) (2005) - <b>Care farming (day-care for the elderly) (2007)</b>
E	John	40s	- Dairy farming - Pig farming - Arable farming	- <b>Cheese production and selling (1970)</b> - Landscape and nature management (1999) - Farm education (2010)
F	Carol and David	40s	- Dairy farming	- Landscape and nature management (1982) - <b>Agro-tourism (bed and breakfast) (2008)</b>

<sup>a</sup> For privacy reasons, respondents' names have been changed.

<sup>b</sup> Main multifunctional activities are in bold.

The questionnaire used in the interviews consisted of sixteen open-ended questions, with a number of deepening sub-questions. The questions were strongly related to the background of this study which is the farm-level transition from production-oriented to multifunctional farming. The questions stimulated farmers to reflect on the present, past and development in time of four major interview themes. The questionnaire is attached to this thesis (see Appendix 3).

The interviews took approximately two hours each, and were audio-recorded and then fully transcribed by the author of this thesis.

### 2.3.3. Analysis

Data analysis aimed to explore how Rae's (2006) conceptualisation of entrepreneurial learning was expressed in the studied cases. As we focussed on a small number of cases, the analysis was done manually.

The first step taken was to carefully and repeatedly read the interview transcripts to understand the meaning of the responses. The transcription process was itself an important step towards becoming familiar with the interview data. In the next step, the transcripts were studied intensively and the relevant

fragments filed under Rae's (2006) main aspects of entrepreneurial learning: 1) *personal and social emergence of entrepreneurial identity*, 2) *contextual learning* and 3) *the negotiated enterprise*. The filed fragments were subsequently studied again and each of them was labelled more specifically. In relation to the first theme: *personal and social emergence of entrepreneurial identity*, labels were used such as: production-oriented identity vs. multifunctional identity, entrepreneurial identity, identity development, struggles between identities, displaying entrepreneurial identity etc. Labelling was continued and refined until a saturation point was reached. The labels, and corresponding fragments, were then again grouped into broader sub-themes. Of the most frequently recurring and notable sub-themes, three were eventually selected. Finally, to contextualise our findings, the three main themes were renamed as 1) *re-developing an entrepreneurial identity*, 2) *crossing the boundaries of agriculture* and 3) *opening up the family farm*. The three main themes, sub-themes and interview fragments, were used as the basis for the following findings section.

## 2.4. Findings

This section presents the three main factors driving entrepreneurial learning in the cases. As described above, they correspond with the main themes in Rae's (2006) framework of entrepreneurial learning: 1) *personal and social emergence of entrepreneurial identity*, 2) *contextual learning* and 3) *the negotiated enterprise*. The findings are supported by verbatim and translated interview fragments.

### 2.4.1. Re-developing an entrepreneurial identity

According to Rae (2006), the development of an entrepreneurial identity is a profound aspect of becoming an entrepreneur: "simply acquiring entrepreneurial skills and knowledge is not sufficient; the person who begins to act as an entrepreneur is assuming the identity of an entrepreneur" (Rae, 2006, p. 45).

In the context of this study, identity plays a similarly important role. The development of entrepreneurial identity in this context, however, has to be seen in a different way. In contrast to the emerging entrepreneurs in Rae's work, the studied farmers were found to already have some kind of an entrepreneurial identity. They already identified themselves as entrepreneurs because, in The

Netherlands and especially within the agricultural domain, all farmers are seen as ‘entrepreneurs’, regardless of their behaviours. Their experiences with the development of their new businesses had forced the interviewed farmers to rethink practices they had previously taken for granted and to re-define entrepreneurship. In retrospect, all of the farmers expressed that the development of the new businesses had made them realise “what real entrepreneurship is about”.

Thus, instead of developing an entrepreneurial identity, the farmers re-define entrepreneurship and *re-develop* their former entrepreneurial identities. These observations therefore inspired us to re-formulate Rae’s (2006) theme as ‘re-developing an entrepreneurial identity’.

#### Assuming a different entrepreneurial identity is not self-evident

The studied cases show that the development of a different entrepreneurial identity is not self-evident. The perceived existence of a strong production-oriented norm seemed to play an important role in this respect. During the interviews, all farmers argued in some way that agriculture is still strongly production-oriented and that multifunctional farming is not yet fully accepted. The general view would be that ‘real farmers’ focus on production maximisation through intensification and scale enlargement. According to the productivist norm, the development of new income-generating business activities is an exit-strategy for those farmers who have failed to keep up with the developments in agriculture.

Some of the farmers, and particularly those (still) operating in strongly production-oriented social contexts, described to have experienced disapproval of their strategy by family and colleagues. The perceived disapproval clearly troubled farmers seeking to legitimise their new practices and challenged their development of more compatible identities.

The difficulties surrounding identity development are clearly illustrated by case F. In 2008, Carol and David started a successful bed and breakfast next to their dairy farm and their social environment was not particularly supportive of their plans. In the following fragment, David describes how some contacts responded to their plans:

*David: "Our feed supplier and colleagues were thunderstruck: why don't you carry on farming? Put your money into something useful. Many colleagues just said: "you're mad, completely lost your mind.""*

Despite their enthusiasm regarding the bed and breakfast, David and Carol repeatedly questioned their strategy during the interview. David was found to express the most uncertainty.

*David: "I'm not really confident. Well, in some things I am, in some not. Look at those guys across the street [the neighbouring dairy farmers], in ten years' time, I reckon they almost quadrupled their farm. Can I say that? No, those guys are a hundred per cent convinced they took the right path."*

*Carol: "Soon, when we lose the quota [abolition of the milk quota system in 2015], they will be ahead of us."*

The case of Carol and David shows that the development of new identities as multifunctional farmers is not self-evident. Despite their engagement with new activities, productivism remains their main frame of reference. David's reasoning seemed to be particularly deeply rooted in the productivist model of agriculture. In this case, dominant production-oriented thinking clearly forms a barrier for farmers to legitimise their new roles and to develop more compatible identities.

### Breaking free from the productivist norm

The studied cases demonstrate that developing their new entrepreneurial identities is a slow process for the farmers; through exploration and experimentation, they acquire the self-confidence, skills and belief in multifunctionality required to break free from the productivist norm. Breaking free from the productivist norm seems to be fundamental to the development of stronger degrees of on-farm multifunctionality.

Care farmers Mark (case C) and Sarah (case D) particularly stressed the explorative and experimental character of their start-ups. They deliberately started their activities informally, on a small scale, in order to avoid excessive risk. Through experimentation, they found out whether the new activities suited them, their family and the existing farm. After some time, gaining experience

and self-confidence, they dared to invest in the professionalisation and growth of their activities. In the following fragment, Sarah reflects on this experimental period:

*“After being multifunctional for some years, you know which paths to take. You’ve built up something, created a network, met new people, all this definitely makes you more confident to take further steps [to professionalise and grow].”*

Mark (C) and Sarah (D) said that it took them years of experience to discover that ‘good entrepreneurship’ goes well beyond productivist thought and action. After acquiring sufficient self-confidence, skills and belief in their new strategy, they were able to break free from the productivist norm and dared to invest in professionalisation and growth.

A special case in this context is John (case E). John is, in contrast to the others, a second generation multifunctional farmer. In 1970, his mother started producing and selling cheese as a side-activity to the dairy farm. Due to his multifunctional-minded social background, productivism has never been his main frame of reference. From his parents’ practices, he already learned that ‘good entrepreneurship’ goes well beyond productivist farming. While the other farmers struggled with the perceived productivist norm, John did not need to break free from it when he started to professionalise and expand his multifunctional activities.

### Displaying entrepreneurial identity

The more experienced farmers (cases A, B, C and E), who were found to have a strong propensity to display their entrepreneurial identity, clearly having passed the phase of doubt and uncertainty discussed earlier.

Fruit farmer Jack (case A) was most pronounced about his entrepreneurial identity. In 1999 he sold his ancestral farm and re-started in an area with more tourism. The new location provided better opportunities to sell his fruit directly to consumers and to earn a better living. Discussing his method of farming, he repeatedly displayed his entrepreneurial identity and expressed disapproval of the behaviours of his more conventional colleagues, particularly focussing on the arable farmers which are dominant in the area.



*“With all due respect, how busy are those arable farmers? Early November everything is harvested, then they start cultivating, by Christmas the work is done, what are they doing between Christmas and early spring...? They have ample time to develop their own end-product. Why don’t they pack their potatoes into small portions, be creative with, let’s say: ‘regional potatoes’. The best potatoes are grown here and in Flevoland [a Dutch province] you know! Do something with it!”*

The fragment clearly shows that Jack wants to be seen as an entrepreneurial farmer. He considers himself more entrepreneurial than his conventional colleagues because he has developed a new strategy, diversified his products and made a direct connection with the market. Jack displayed a strong entrepreneurial identity, possibly to legitimise his actions and stand up against the perceived productivist norm.

#### **2.4.2. Crossing the boundaries of agriculture**

According to Rae (2006), entrepreneurial learning is the outcome of a process of contextual learning. “Contextual learning includes social participation in community, industry and other networks through which individual experiences are related and compared, and shared meaning is constructed” (Rae, 2006, p. 47).

In the context of our study, social participation and interaction are of similar importance. The farmers develop the propensity, knowledge and skills to start and develop new business activities, through social interactions in the work environment. The farmers who were studied learn through interactions with actors such as their partner, family, friends, staff, colleagues, other rural dwellers, entrepreneurs, customers, suppliers, government representatives and so on. However, central to the development of non-farming activities, such as care-farming, agro-tourism, farm shops and so on, is the nature of the networks farmers connect with and operate in. In their new role, farmers have to learn to look beyond agriculture and to cross the boundaries of the agricultural domain.

“Leaving the farm yard”

In the interviews, the farmers often referred to a process they described in terms of “leaving the farm yard”. With this expression, they emphasise that the

development of their new activities increasingly requires them to leave the farm for more social participation. 'Leaving the farm yard' refers moreover to the strong sectoral focus farmers perceive themselves as having. The farmers argued that as well as crossing the physical boundaries of the farm, they have to broaden their horizons and connect with and operate beyond the agricultural domain.

The issue of 'leaving the farm yard' is well illustrated by the case of agrotourism farmers Anne and Peter (case B). Over time, Anne and Peter participated increasingly with actors outside the agricultural domain. The couple argued repeatedly that connecting with the world outside agriculture is crucial to the development of non-farming businesses. In the following interview fragment, Anne clearly distinguishes between two separate worlds and stresses the importance of leaving the farm yard and crossing the boundaries of agriculture:

*"With our new activities, we're connecting agriculture with the outside world. So, you should look beyond agriculture. We explore the world out there and connect with other people."*

The processes of 'leaving the farm yard' and 'crossing the boundaries of agriculture' were not only valued by strongly motivated and multifunctional-oriented farmers, such as Anne and Peter (see Appendix 1); in fact, all of the farmers interviewed stressed the importance of connecting with 'new worlds'. The importance given to the connection with these new social arenas shows moreover that farmers experience agriculture as a strong and closed domain.

It is important to note that although boundary crossing is highly valued by all the farmers, doing so is not self-evident. It was found that some farmers did not feel capable or comfortable to connect with and operate in non-farming environments. This again, is strongly related to the relatively closed and secluded nature of the agricultural domain.

The problems connected to boundary crossing are well demonstrated by the case of care farmer Mark (case C). Mark and his wife are developing a fast growing day-care centre next to their dairy farm. Their farm is located in a strongly urbanised area, close to a provincial town. To promote their business and to network, Mark decided to attend the town's annual New Years' reception<sup>10</sup>. In the

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<sup>10</sup> In The Netherlands, it is common for municipalities to organise a drinks event to celebrate the New Year. These events are freely accessible and generally provide good networking opportunities for local entrepreneurs.

following interview fragment, Mark reflects on the first time he attended the event:

*“I didn’t feel very much at ease at the New Year’s reception. After all, I’m just a farmer. Still, I found it very important to show my face there. It surprised me actually; everyone was very interested in me”.*

The interview fragment shows that, although Mark was very motivated, he initially felt out of place as a farmer attending such a formal event. However, due to his perseverance and positive experiences, he eventually learned that there is a place for him at these meetings. Since then, he has attended every year. Implicitly, Mark also perfectly illustrates the importance of identity in this process. His strong farming identity seemed to have initially represented a challenge to him as he tried to cross the boundaries of the agricultural domain.

#### Creating room for contextual learning

In the cases studied, the existing agricultural production forms the basis for new activities. Dealing with a limit in the availability of labour, farming families have to find a way to combine agricultural production with the development of their new activities. In some cases, creating enough room for contextual learning was perceived as problematic. Problems were particularly experienced by relatively stronger multifunctional-orientated farmers involved in labour-intensive dairy farming (cases B, C and F).

The tensions between agricultural production and the room for contextual learning are well demonstrated by the case of Anne and Peter (case B). Peter particularly started to perceive milk production as a factor limiting his multifunctional ambitions. Not long before the interview took place, they stopped milking to create more room for manoeuvre. In the following interview fragment, Anne explains:

*“Peter is a very creative person, he’s always inventing things. Before [we stopped milk production], he could invent but lacked time to take action and implement. Now we’ve stopped milking, there is time. This morning, for instance, he went to his innovative entrepreneurship study group. You see, these things he’d like to do more. Now he has the time, milking twice a day is not our main drive any more.”*

The case of Anne and Peter shows that in some cases agricultural production can be perceived as a hindrance to the development of the new businesses. For Anne and Peter, creating more room for manoeuvre was an important reason to extensify the agricultural production. They switched from dairy cattle to more extensive beef production. Although Anne and Peter took the greatest step, all six cases showed that a certain degree of extensification was used to create more room for contextual learning.

### Gender aspects of contextual learning

Gender seemed to be an important aspect of contextual learning. In the studied cases, a rather traditional gendered division of roles was observed: the men generally focus on the agricultural production, while the women initiate and lead the development of the new activities. The women moreover often combine the development of the new activities with farming jobs, their partners' administration, housekeeping and taking care of the family. An exception is the case of Jack (case A). Jack is divorced and runs his farm together with his adult son.

Due to the traditional gendered role division, the contextual learning focussing on multifunctionality has become a women's affair as well. In the cases studied, two co-existing learning processes were often present: a production-oriented learning process led by the men and a multifunctional-oriented learning process led by the women. The co-existence of learning processes was particularly observed in less experienced and relatively weaker multifunctional cases (D and F). In more experienced and stronger multifunctional cases (B and C), the co-existing learning processes have clearly become more interwoven. The increasing extensification of the agricultural production and the introduction of external labour in these cases, contributed significantly to the development of a more shared learning process.

In some cases, the women seem to play a particularly important role in the process of crossing the boundaries of agriculture. Particularly interesting are cases D and F. Compared to their partners, Sarah and Carol found it less difficult to leave the farm yard and operate beyond the agricultural domain. The farm women pointed at their non-farming backgrounds as important factors in this respect: both grew up, were educated and worked outside agriculture. It was their marriage and their role in taking care of the family which introduced them into the sector. Sarah and Carol suggested that their non-farming backgrounds

made them less embedded in agriculture and therefore less conditioned by the productivist norm. From this point of view, Sarah and Carol seem to play a crucial role in the development of the farm, acting as intermediaries between two often disconnected worlds and providing access to important resources required for the development of on-farm multifunctionality.

### 2.4.3. Opening up the family farm

The third aspect of entrepreneurial learning defined by Rae (2006) is the notion of the negotiated enterprise. The negotiated enterprise refers to the negotiated relationships entrepreneurs have with actors in the work environment, and the learning which emerges from these. Rae, considers the engagement of others as a vital aspect in the development of a new venture: “a new business venture is not enacted by one person alone, but is dependent on the outcome of negotiated relationship with other parties. The ideas and aspirations of individuals are realised through interactive processes of exchange with others within and around the enterprise” (Rae, 2006, p. 49).

The negotiated enterprise is an important theme in the context of this study and was found to be strongly related to a process we refer to as ‘opening up the family farm’. The process of opening up the family farm was particularly observed in the relatively stronger multifunctional-oriented cases in which the new activities became a significant part of the farm. To get the work done and create more room for manoeuvre, the strongly multifunctional-oriented farmers often introduced external labour into the farm, such as paid professionals, volunteers and students. The farmers consider the introduction of externals as a key moment: the family farming context is opened up, often for the first time in generations. The new dynamics created by the introduction of external labour were moreover found to be of significant importance to the notion of the negotiated enterprise in this context. This section will therefore focus on the relationship between the farmer’s entrepreneurial learning and the new organisational dynamics created by the introduction of external labour.

#### Realising personal ambitions through collective action

In cases A, C, D and E, external labour was introduced into the farm. With the introduction of external labour, the organisation becomes larger and more

complex. In this changing context, learning includes dealing with staff and the involvement of others in achieving goals.

The case of Mark and his wife (case C) clearly demonstrates this side of the learning process. In only a few years' time, their childcare side-activity developed into a day-care centre employing more than ten childcare professionals. The new organisational dynamics, caused by the employment of a large number of employees, was a recurring theme during the interview. In the following fragment Mark reflects on the new dynamics on their farm:

*“When people are employed for a longer time, they start to feel more at ease. It can be very difficult for people when, at a certain moment, things taken for granted are changed by us. In meetings, we often have to discuss things and negotiate with our staff, this can make things very complicated. We really have to learn how to deal with this. It's not easy, but we're making progress. Actually, it's also a fun thing to do.”*

This fragment clearly demonstrates the ongoing learning and negotiation process between Mark, his wife and their staff. In general, the introduction of externals into the family farm tremendously changes the work environment that the farmer has taken for granted. Instead of deciding and doing everything themselves, they have to realise their personal ambitions through collective action.

### Assuming different roles

With the introduction of external labour, the organisation of the farm was found to become larger and more complex, this changing context is forcing farmers to re-define their roles and positions within the organisation. Respondents indicated that they had first of all to learn to “take a step back”. Previously used to doing much of the farm work themselves, they had to learn how to delegate and to allow themselves enough room for manoeuvre. As the farmers have a strong hands-on-mentality, most of them did not immediately feel comfortable in their new role. Some of them even felt guilty about leaving a considerable amount of work to others, related to their perception of ‘work’: typical entrepreneurial activities such as networking were initially not seen as ‘working’ due to the absence of physical labour.

The process of changing roles was a recurring theme in the interviews held with Sarah (case D). Sarah started with care farming activities next to their pig farm and tree nursery in 2007, and leads the development of the care activities. Shortly before the interview took place, she introduced two part-time care professionals into the farm to professionalise and expand the care activities. In the following fragment, Sarah reflects on the process of assuming a more professional and formal role in the farm:

*“What I’m facing now, I have to become more competent in managing staff. You know, it’s easy to discuss when everything goes well. When things are not OK, if you want to change something, I don’t know how to... you have to become very formal. This is one of my weaknesses. I have to, and this is what I’ve learned in a recent course, I really have to prepare and become more formal. You have to avoid becoming too emotional: “oh don’t worry, no problem”. No, some things are not OK. Sometimes, I really should act more professional and formal. I’m just not familiar with that.”*

Sarah’s care farming business grew rapidly. From an informal side-activity, it became a major part of the farm, employing two part-time professionals and generating a substantial part of the family income. The fragment clearly illustrates that Sarah experiences tensions between her roles in this changing context. From being a farmer’s wife and mother, she is becoming an entrepreneur, manager and employer. The required business attitude is unfamiliar to her.

The case of Sarah illustrates moreover the gendered aspects of entrepreneurial learning, as discussed above. Although Sarah and her husband run a farm together, they have different roles and therefore operate in different contexts and experience different learning processes.

Introduction of external labour stimulates learning and accelerates farm development

Finally, the introduction of external labour and the ensuing dynamics were found to enhance entrepreneurial learning and the development of the new businesses in the studied cases.

The introduction of external labour makes the organisation not only larger and more complex but increasingly heterogeneous. New entrants introduce new knowledge, experiences, skills, networks and viewpoints into the farm. From considering newcomers as a burden initially, the employing farmers (case A, C, D and E) learned to see the newcomers increasingly as valuable human resources. The critical capacity created was moreover seen as a factor which stimulated the farmers to consider new perspectives. Mark (case C), for instance, experienced the negotiations with his staff as challenging and yet stimulating in terms of his capacity for self-reflection.

Together, the new dynamics caused by the introduction of external labour are significant for entrepreneurial learning. The point at which the farmers opened up the family farm can therefore be seen as a catalyst to the development of the new businesses.

## 2.5. Conclusions and discussion

Farmers' adaptive behaviours to the environmental, social and economic crisis have resulted in an increased scientific attention for entrepreneurship in agriculture. Although extensive research has been carried out on farmers' entrepreneurial skills, the existing body of literature does not adequately covers the learning process underlying the development of these skills.

To contribute to bridging this gap, this study explored the learning process underlying the development of entrepreneurial skills. By studying farmers who have started new non-farming businesses on their existing farms, we focussed on the learning processes occurring in the context of multifunctional agriculture. We introduced and applied the concept of *entrepreneurial learning* (Cope, 2005; Deakins and Freel, 1998; Dutta and Crossan, 2005; Minniti and Bygrave, 2001; Politis, 2005; Rae, 2006), and particularly aimed to identify which major factors are driving this process in the context of this particular type of agricultural entrepreneurship.

Guided by Rae's (2006) framework, our study brought the entrepreneurial learning process to light and unveiled three major factors driving entrepreneurial learning in the cases studied: 1) *re-developing an entrepreneurial identity*, 2) *crossing the boundaries of agriculture* and 3) *opening up the family farm*. The three factors, and their associated themes, are summarised in table 4.



**Table 4:** Three key factors driving entrepreneurial learning in multifunctional agriculture.

<b>Re-developing an entrepreneurial identity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assuming a different entrepreneurial identity is not self-evident</li> <li>• Breaking free from the productivist norm</li> <li>• Displaying entrepreneurial identity</li> </ul>
<b>Crossing the boundaries of agriculture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Leaving the farm yard”</li> <li>• Creating room for contextual learning</li> <li>• Gender aspects of contextual learning</li> </ul>
<b>Opening up the family farm</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Realising personal ambitions through collective action</li> <li>• Assuming different roles</li> <li>• Introduction of external labour stimulates learning and accelerates farm development</li> </ul>

The first factor identified as important for entrepreneurial learning in the cases studied is *re-developing an entrepreneurial identity*. By starting new non-farming businesses on their existing farms, the farmers move away from their productivist role in agriculture and develop more multifunctional ways of farming. In contrast to general emerging entrepreneurs, the farmers studied were found to already have a certain entrepreneurial identity, but one which was strongly rooted in the productivist model of agriculture. To become multifunctional, the farmers must re-define entrepreneurship and develop self-conceptualisations which are more compatible with their new role in agriculture. Thus, instead of developing an entrepreneurial identity, the farmers *re-develop* their entrepreneurial identities.

The development of a different entrepreneurial identity was found to be far from self-evident. The perceived productivist norm challenges emerging multifunctional farmers to legitimise their new roles and to re-develop their professional identities. Despite the development of new non-farming activities, the farmers’ self-conceptualisations were, still, deeply rooted in production-oriented thinking. The cases studied showed that the farmers developed their new identities slowly through periods of explorative and experimental learning, thus acquiring the self-confidence, skills and belief in multifunctionality which are required in order to break free from the (perceived) productivist norm. Finally, whereas emerging multifunctional farmers struggled to legitimise their new strategies, their more experienced and stronger multifunctional counterparts were found to display their strong entrepreneurial identities during the interviews.

The second factor found to be important in entrepreneurial learning is *crossing the boundaries of agriculture*. Our findings show that ‘leaving the farm

yard', for more social interaction, broadening perspectives and operating beyond the agricultural domain are crucial to the development of new non-farming businesses. These processes were generally highly valued by the farmers, and yet often considered challenging. The less experienced farmers in particular felt uncomfortable and incapable of connecting with and operating in non-farming environments.

Crossing the boundaries of agriculture was furthermore seen as a highly demanding process. The more advanced and stronger multifunctional-oriented farmers experienced problems in finding enough room for manoeuvre. The often labour-intensive agricultural production was seen as a major hindering factor in this respect. To create more room for manoeuvre, some of the farmers therefore decided to extensify their production-oriented activities.

Finally, the boundary crossing process seemed to be strongly gendered. The contextual learning focussing on multifunctionality was seen in these case studies to be primarily carried out by women. The women in two cases were furthermore found to be playing a particularly important role regarding boundary crossing. Compared to their male partners, the women felt less embedded in agriculture, conditioned by the productivist norm and consequently seemed to cross the boundaries of agriculture more easily. The women are thus seen to play a crucial role in the development of the farm, acting as intermediaries between social environments in- and outside the farm and acting as a bridge for important resources required for the development of on-farm multifunctionality.

The third and final factor important to entrepreneurial learning in this context is *opening up the family farm*. This factor refers to the changes in farmers' roles and work environments, and the learning that emerges as a result of the introduction of external labour, as the work environment becomes larger, more complex, dynamic and socially heterogeneous. In this changing context, the farmers learned that they needed to involve others to realise their personal ambitions, having to assume different roles and learn to create more room for manoeuvre by delegating work to others. Moreover, new entrants to the farm were found to introduce new knowledge, experiences, skills, networks and more critical capacity into the farm. All together, the process of opening up the family farm is clearly a catalyst for entrepreneurial learning and the development of the farm as a whole.

In general, the entrepreneurial learning process brought to light in this chapter clearly demonstrates that the development of entrepreneurship in the

context of multifunctional agriculture goes much further than simply developing farmers' entrepreneurial skills. As well as developing their skills, farmers need to re-develop their entrepreneurial identities, learn to cross the boundaries of agriculture and find their way through a changing work environment.

It was also shown that the transition from production-oriented to multifunctional farming (Wilson, 2008) is fundamental to understanding entrepreneurial learning in this context as the farmers studied clearly struggled to break loose from the productivist regime and its associated logic. In line with Burton and Wilson (2006), our findings suggest that despite their multifunctional behaviours, farmers' thoughts are still deeply rooted in the productivist model of agriculture. Our findings also support those of earlier work pointing at the incompatibility of farmers' acquired resources with the development of their new businesses. These studies show that the resources previously acquired by the farmers suit their production-oriented activities but are inadequate to develop new non-farming businesses (Alsos and Carter, 2006; McElwee et al., 2006; Pyysiäinen et al., 2006). Our findings show that the productivist inheritance clearly forms a barrier to entrepreneurial learning in multifunctional agriculture. The far-reaching effects of the post-war production-oriented modernisation process should therefore not be underestimated in terms of their (negative) impact on the development of entrepreneurship in (multifunctional) agriculture.

The debate on entrepreneurship in agriculture has predominantly focussed on farmers' entrepreneurial skills. The learning process underlying the development of these skills has rarely been explored in depth. By identifying and discussing the major factors underlying the development of entrepreneurial skills in multifunctional agriculture, this chapter has brought the entrepreneurial learning process to light and demonstrated its complexity. Based on this study, we argue that the debate on entrepreneurship in agriculture needs to move beyond its current focus on entrepreneurial skills. Understanding farmers' entrepreneurial skills is still important, and yet exploring how farmers develop these skills provides a major challenge for future inquiries into entrepreneurship in agriculture. This study can be seen as a first step in this crucial direction.

Central in this chapter was Rae's (2006) framework of entrepreneurial learning. Although Rae's work was based on emerging entrepreneurship in technology-based enterprises, the framework has proved useful in our context as well. However, although the framework's themes were rather generic, their particular significance was clearly very context dependent. This is especially true

for ‘the emergence of entrepreneurial identity’ and ‘contextual learning’ which are demonstrated to have a very specific role and meaning in the context of this study.

We conclude by pointing towards some potential avenues for further research on entrepreneurial learning in multifunctional agriculture. First, our study identified a number interesting differences between learning in stronger and weaker multifunctional contexts. Future inquiries could therefore explore entrepreneurial learning in relation to the diversity in degrees of on-farm multifunctionality. A second avenue for further research is the role of gender in entrepreneurial learning. This study suggested that female farmers play an important role in the process of transition towards multifunctionality with regard to the boundary crossing process. More work is required to study the gendered aspects of entrepreneurial learning in further detail. The third suggestion for further research is to undertake more longitudinal studies of entrepreneurial learning. Studying farmers over a longer period is needed in order to deepen our understandings as to how farmers’ learning processes evolves over time. Finally, the concept of entrepreneurial learning was derived from general small business entrepreneurship literature. We have to stress that small business entrepreneurship literature provides many useful concepts and frameworks helpful to our future work on entrepreneurship in agriculture. Therefore, in line with Alsos et al. (2011), we would call for more work applying frameworks from general small-business entrepreneurship literature into the field of agriculture.

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# Chapter 3

**Multifunctional orientation  
in farming and the nature  
of the social capital used for  
entrepreneurial learning:  
towards a diversified  
approach**





### 3. Multifunctional orientation in farming and the nature of the social capital used for entrepreneurial learning: towards a diversified approach

#### Abstract

This chapter explores the relationship between specific forms of multifunctional orientation in farming and the nature of the social capital used for entrepreneurial learning. We draw on structured interviews held with a diverse sample of 120 multifunctional farmers, throughout The Netherlands. It is suggested that those farmers with a relatively strong multifunctional orientation interact with others for entrepreneurial learning more actively. Moreover, indications were found that they increasingly interact beyond the boundaries of their direct environments. Whereas farmers with a weak or moderate multifunctional orientation stay 'close to home', by predominantly drawing on *bonding* social capital, their counterparts with a stronger multifunctional orientation seem to be increasingly broadening their horizons by drawing more on *bridging* social capital. These farmers can therefore potentially access new learning environments outside the agricultural domain, thereby exposing themselves to new and different ideas which in turn foster their entrepreneurial learning. The study demonstrates that multifunctional farmers represent a highly diverse group of actors driven by different combinations of multifunctional thought and action. Moreover, they employ different entrepreneurial learning strategies and therefore have different needs with regard to fostering entrepreneurship and the development of stronger degrees of farm-level multifunctionality.

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### 3.1. Introduction

For a long time, agriculture was dominated by small family farms which focussed primarily on improving their current activity rather than exploring new areas of activities (Haugen and Vik, 2008; McElwee et al., 2006; Morgan et al., 2010; Vesala and Vesala, 2010). Over the last decades this situation has changed dramatically as farmers are increasingly challenged by the ongoing liberalisation of the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), globalisation and a rapidly changing, more critical society. As a reaction to these challenges, an increasing number of farmers have started diversifying their activities by developing new non-farming businesses on their existing farms; these include agro-tourism, integrated (child)care, quality production, short producer-consumer supply chains and so on. Those farmers who are developing such new multifunctional business activities, are broadly recognised as becoming more entrepreneurial (Alsos et al., 2011; Carter, 1998; Grande, 2011; Haugen and Vik, 2008; McElwee, 2006, 2008; Pyysiäinen et al., 2006; Vesala and Pyysiäinen, 2008)<sup>11</sup>.

Seuneke et al. (2013) describe the development of entrepreneurship in multifunctional agriculture as an *entrepreneurial learning process* and highlight the crucial role of social capital in this context; through social participation and interaction with a myriad of actors, within and outside the farm, farmers develop the propensity, knowledge and skills to start and develop new business activities. Moreover, as multifunctional farmers develop new *non-farming* businesses, they need to increasingly build social capital which extends beyond the agricultural domain as well (Seuneke et al., 2013). Paradoxically however, recent studies have shown that farmers tend to rely predominantly on their already existing (production-oriented) social capital despite this is often falling short during the development of new multifunctional business activities (Alsos and Carter, 2006; Gielen et al., 2003b; Pyysiäinen et al., 2006). The path-dependencies created by the post-war, production-oriented, agricultural modernisation process are suggested to be an important factor in this regard, causing farmers' reluctance to 'cross the boundaries of agriculture' (Alsos and Carter, 2006; Burton and Wilson, 2006; Ward, 1993; Wilson, 2008).

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<sup>11</sup> Although conventional production-oriented farming provides opportunities for entrepreneurship (Vesala and Pyysiäinen, 2008), recent studies indicate that the development of new non-farming businesses particularly challenges farmers to re-orient themselves, moving beyond the practices they may take for granted and developing entrepreneurial skills (Morgan et al., 2010; Vesala and Vesala, 2010).

Most studies focussing on the development of entrepreneurship in this context have hitherto approached multifunctional farmers rather one-dimensionally by considering them as a uniform group (Alsos et al., 2011; Haugen and Vik, 2008; McElwee et al., 2006; Morgan et al., 2010; Wolf and Schoorlemmer, 2007). Multifunctional farming however represents a farming model encompassing a great diversity of strategies (Ploeg et al., 2008; Wilson, 2008). Thus, whilst multifunctional farmers are driven by a diversity of combinations of production-oriented and multifunctional thought and action (Wilson, 2008), it is assumed in this study that the nature of the social capital drawn upon for entrepreneurial learning will differ accordingly.

This line of thought forms the basis of this study. More specifically, we aim to make a first step towards a more diversified approach to learning in the context of multifunctional farming by exploring the relationship between farmers' specific form of multifunctional orientation and the nature of the social capital used for entrepreneurial learning. The study is guided by the following research question:

*What is the relationship between the specific form of multifunctional orientation and the nature of the social capital used for entrepreneurial learning?*

The remainder of this chapter is structured as follows. Firstly, the chapter describes the theoretical framework which underpins the study. Next, it elaborates on the method used, followed by a presentation of the main results. Finally, the chapter closes by drawing out and discussing the main conclusions.

## 3.2. Theoretical framework

### 3.2.1. Multifunctional orientation in farming

Wilson's (2008) normative conceptualisation of farm-level multifunctionality provides a useful framework for understanding farmers' specific multifunctional orientation. The author argued that in the development of their multifunctional business activities, farmers are driven by a combination of production- and multifunctional-oriented thought and action. Whereas production-oriented thought and action focus on the conventional production of food and fibres, multifunctional-oriented thought and action focus on generating new sources

of income by developing new multifunctional business activities. The sum of farmers' production- and multifunctional-oriented thought and action would determine their specific multifunctional orientation and the degree of farm-level multifunctionality over time (Wilson, 2008). As the identification, evaluation and pursuit of new business opportunities is seen as fundamental to entrepreneurship (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000), multifunctional-oriented thought and action is considered here as increasingly more entrepreneurial than production-oriented thought and action.

Farmers' particular form of multifunctional orientation is highly dynamic as it may or may not change over time due to a complex interplay between a wide range of case-specific enabling and limiting factors (Wilson, 2008). Important factors on a personal level are for instance gender, age and education level (Bock, 2004; Carter, 1998), while social factors include the family context and social background (Burton and Wilson, 2006; Gasson et al., 1988; Jervell, 2011) and finally farm characteristics include size, ownership, production-oriented basis and geographical location (Morgan et al., 2010; Wilson, 2008) (for more details concerning the factors influencing farmers' multifunctional orientation, see also paragraph 2.2.2.).

Wilson (2008) demonstrated that farmers' particular combination of production and multifunctional-oriented thought and action can 'result' in 'weak' and 'strong' degrees of farm-level multifunctionality. More specifically, whereas weakly multifunctional farms are typically small, production-oriented family farms with an additional side-activity, strongly multifunctional ones are more elaborate rural enterprises employing externals and having multiple integrated on-farm businesses. Again, as strongly multifunctional farmers have increasingly broken away from their former production-oriented role in agriculture by developing new non-farming business activities and creating more elaborate rural enterprises, they are considered here as becoming more entrepreneurial (Vesala and Vesala, 2010).

### **3.2.2. Entrepreneurial learning and social capital**

In this study, the engine considered to be driving the development of new and more multifunctional on-farm businesses is approached from a learning perspective. More specifically, by employing the concept of *entrepreneurial learning* (Cope, 2005; Deakins and Freel, 1998; Dutta and Crossan, 2005; Minniti and Bygrave, 2001; Politis, 2005; Rae, 2006). In essence, the development of new and

more multifunctional on-farm businesses is all about identifying, evaluating and pursuing new business opportunities, the conceptual heart of entrepreneurship (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000). As a unifying definition of entrepreneurial learning is lacking (Wang and Chugh, 2013), we define entrepreneurial learning here as the development of the propensity, knowledge and skills to initiate and further develop new business activities.

As we approach entrepreneurial learning as a highly socially situated phenomenon (Hamilton, 2011; Karataş-Özkan, 2011; Lans et al., 2008; Rae, 2006), social capital is of great importance to entrepreneurs. By consulting spouses, relatives, friends, and fellow entrepreneurs, participating in meetings and seminars, contacting professional advisers and so on, according to Rae (2006), entrepreneurs may thus enhance their ability to recognise and develop new business opportunities. In the context of this study, social capital is defined as the sets of both close and more distant social network ties or relationships by which entrepreneurs – through interaction and participation – enhance their propensity, knowledge and skills to found and develop new business activities.

Like many others, we make a distinction between *bonding* and *bridging* social capital (Adler and Kwon, 2002; Aldrich and Zimmer, 1986; Davidsson and Honig, 2003). Whereas bonding social capital consists of strong, homogeneous and horizontal ties close to the entrepreneur, bridging social capital is typically characterised by a great number of weaker, heterogeneous, vertical and distant ties. In the context of this study, bonding social capital is regarded as including ties close to farmers themselves and within the agricultural domain such as spouses, parents and children involved in the farm, other relatives, close friends, other multifunctional farmers and being part of a multifunctional cooperative (relative insiders to agriculture). In contrast, bridging social capital is regarded as including those ties which are initially more distant but particularly capable of providing access to new non-farming networks, such as professional advisers, other rural entrepreneurs, local governments, new market partners, customers, knowledge institutions and so on (relative outsiders to agriculture).

Although not explicitly about learning, much has been said about bonding and bridging social capital with regard to the start-up process and firm development. Bonding social capital based on strong ties is for instance seen as crucial in the flow of valuable, fine-grained, information as well as in providing access to finance, free professional advice and a helping hand during the start-up phase (Uzzi, 1997). Bonding social capital, based on strong ties, has been claimed

to be particularly important for early stage entrepreneurs as they generally lack an extensive resource base at this point (Jack et al., 2008). Alternatively, it was demonstrated that bonding social capital can become a hindrance to further development of a firm as it has a tendency to impose greater pressure of social conformity, which does not particularly stimulate innovative thinking (Burt, 1992; Hite and Hesterly, 2001). Moreover, Uzzi (1997) demonstrated that over-embedded bonding social capital tends to reduce the inflow of new information from weak or less embedded social capital. Bridging social capital, based on weaker ties, is seen on the other hand to be particularly important with regard to learning, as it imposes less pressure of conformity, allows for more experimentation, provides an outsider's perspective and offers access to new learning environments, exposing entrepreneurs to new and different ideas (Ruef, 2002).

The key to learning, however, could be the *diversity* of ties within entrepreneurs' social capital (Renzulli et al., 2000; Ruef, 2002; Uzzi, 1997). Ruef (2002) for instance argued that entrepreneurs with social capital involving close as well as more distant and less embedded ties are more likely to be innovative than those relying solely on a more homogeneous social capital. Moreover, according to Ruef (2002), by building social capital consisting of a diversity of ties, entrepreneurs could diminish the threats potentially inherent in bonding social capital such as pressure of conformity, thereby enhancing the inflow of new ideas which foster learning and innovativeness.

To summarise, entrepreneurial learning and the various aspects of social capital discussed in this section are very relevant to the particular focus and context of this study, as developing a multifunctional farm does not only imply starting new businesses, but rather increasingly leaving the farm yard and crossing the boundaries of the agricultural domain (Seuneke et al., 2013). However, after farmers having been embedded in a highly specialised and production-oriented socio-cultural domain for many decades after WWII, developing and using extensive and diverse social capital should not be seen as self-evident (Seuneke et al., 2013).

### 3.3. Method

#### 3.3.1. Creation of the sample

This study is based on the data collected during a Dutch research project exploring the ‘dynamics and robustness’ of multifunctional agriculture in The Netherlands. The project was built on a data-set consisting of structured interviews with 120 multifunctional farmers involved in different production-oriented and (combinations of) on-farm multifunctional business activities. As the project included a regional focus, the farms were located in six different parts of The Netherlands<sup>12</sup>.

The sample was composed through internet searches, contacts from earlier research done in the regions, consulting regional experts (such as extension and development workers, consultants etc.) and via snowball sampling.

The aim, in the selection of farms, was to create a sample which represents a diverse picture of farm-level multifunctionality in The Netherlands. Farms were selected if they were developing one, or a combination, of the following activities: agro-tourism, (child)care, farm education, landscape and nature management, short producer-consumer supply chains (e.g. farm shops) and quality production<sup>13</sup>. There was no selection on the specific production-oriented activities engaged in, such as arable farming, dairy farming, meat production and so on.

#### 3.3.2. Data collection

120 structured interviews were undertaken on respondents’ farms between December 2009 to July 2010. Which member of the farming family was interviewed (male or female farmer, or both) was usually decided by the respondents themselves, based on their task-division within the family farm.

The interviews aimed to collect quantitative data through a structured questionnaire. However, by (audio) recording the interviews additional and more qualitative motivations, life stories and other relevant remarks were captured as well. Although the qualitative data proved to be useful for further interpretation in some cases, this study draws predominantly on the quantitative findings.

The questionnaire used in the interviews consisted of twenty-two structured questions (fill-in questions and matrices using Likert scales) focussing

<sup>12</sup> For more details about the regions, see paragraph 1.4.2.

<sup>13</sup> For more details about the activities, see paragraph 1.4.2.

on various topics including personal and farm characteristics, multifunctional activities, motivations to start new activities, farm development, investments, the importance of cooperation and learning. The questionnaire is attached to this thesis. For more details, see Appendix 2.

### 3.3.3. Data used

Central concepts in this study are 1) *farmers' multifunctional orientation* and 2) the *social capital used for entrepreneurial learning*.

First, *farmers' multifunctional orientation* was operationalised by using the data about (the ratio between) farmers' realised and intentional investments (in Euros) in their production-oriented and multifunctional activities (see Appendix 2, questionnaire topic 11 and 15). Farmers' investment behaviour was seen as indicative for their degree of multifunctional orientation as it was assumed that farmers will only invest in those activities which they regard as important for the future.

Second, *the nature of social capital used for entrepreneurial learning* was operationalised by using the data about the main interactive learning activities undertaken by respondents since the start of their new activities (topic 14). The topic included an exercise asking respondents to give values for a list of different interactive learning activities on a four-point Likert scale: 1 = undertaken to a very slight degree – 4 = undertaken to a very high degree.

Although not explicitly about learning, the data regarding the perceived importance of cooperation with a diversity of business partners were used to explore the nature of the social capital used for entrepreneurial learning as well (topic 12). The way in which farmers perceive the value of cooperation with particular partners (classified as bonding or bridging social capital) is considered meaningful with regard to farmers' particular orientation and social interaction through which learning occurs. Like the previous, this question used a four-point Likert scale: 1 = unimportant – 4 = very important.

Additional support was finally found in the data concerning the perceived importance of external factors (such as development of markets, available financial support, policies, support and facilitation of learning and cooperation etc.) to farmers, as regards future business developments (topic 16). The items 'support and facilitation of their learning' and 'cooperation' were seen as particularly important. Again, a four-point Likert scale was used here: 1 = unimportant – 4 = very important.



### 3.3.4. Analysis

It must be stressed that our study aims to take a first step towards a more diversified approach to learning in the context of multifunctional farming. We have therefore limited ourselves to using descriptive statistics (using IBM SPSS 21 software) in the exploration of the relationship between farmers' multifunctional orientation and the nature of the social capital used for entrepreneurial learning.

The basis of our analysis was the construction and exploration of four main investment categories representing the main forms of multifunctional orientations on farms (see 3.4.2. table 5). Then, based on the investment categories, the ratings (in percentages) of the relevant interview topics (see 3.3.3.) were diversified into investment category specific cross-tables. This chapter is based on the interpretations of the discriminative patterns which were found in these cross-tables.

## 3.4. Results

In this section we will elaborate on the main results of this study. We will start by describing the main characteristics of the sample (N=120). After this, we will characterise the four multifunctional orientation groups, and present the main interactive learning activities undertaken by the 120 farmers, before indicating the discriminative patterns found regarding the social capital used for entrepreneurial learning.

### 3.4.1. Sample characteristics

To start with the respondents, the sample is characterised by an equal gender balance: 41% of the respondents are male, 42% female and in 17% of the cases, both men and women were interviewed. The average age of the respondents is 49 (10% are under 35, 24% between 35-45, 38% 45-55, and 28% over 55).

All farms are traditional family farms, being owned, managed and having been passed through the family, often for generations (Gasson et al., 1988; Jervell, 2011). As only 12% of the farms in the sample farm organically, it can be said that conventional production systems dominate. Main production-oriented activities represented are dairy farming (42%), arable farming (17%) and meat production (cattle and/or sheep) (13%). On average, the total production-oriented turnover per farm is estimated at €327,144,21. The average acreage of land used per farm is 60 hectares.

The majority of the sampled farms have been multifunctional for a relatively long time: 66% for more and 34% for less than a decade. The main multifunctional activities represented by the sample include: 1) agro-tourism (66%), 2) nature and landscape management (53%) and 3) short (producer – consumer) supply chains (mostly farms shops) (51%). On average, the farms are involved in 2.9 on-farm multifunctional business activities. More specifically, 35% of the farms have two activities, 19% three and 18% four. Although economic motives play a role, respondents were found to be strongly socially motivated, the main motives to start new multifunctional business activities being: 1) *reconnection between agriculture and society* (72%), 2) *more contact with consumers/citizens* (63%), followed by 3) *generating additional income* (59%), and 4) *risk spreading* (52%).

The economic impact of the multifunctional activities was found to be substantial. On average, the multifunctional activities generate an estimated turnover of €196,147,37 thus representing 33% of the total farm turnover. Moreover, as the multifunctional activities represent a 40% share of the total family income, multifunctionality contributes considerably to farmers' subsistence.


The impact of the multifunctional activities is increasing: 87% of the respondents perceive increases in turnover, and 80% see the multifunctional activities as providing a growing support to the family income. Finally, 72% of the respondents have introduced an increasing amount of external labour into their farm due to the growth of their multifunctional business activities.

3.4.2. Characterising the main multifunctional orientation groups represented  
The four orientation groups, their investments and distribution in the sample, are summarised in table 5. Each multifunctional orientation group is described in more detail later on and illustrated by a farm portrait (boxes 1-4)<sup>14</sup>. The orientation groups are presented from weak to strong degrees of farm-level multifunctionality (Wilson, 2008).

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<sup>14</sup> The description of the orientation groups and the portraits (boxes 1-4) are drawn from Oostindie et al. (2011b). The portraits are based on sampled cases.

**Table 5:** Degrees of farm-level multifunctionality, orientation groups, investments and distribution in the sample (N=120)

Degree of farm-level multi-functionality	Orientation group	Production-oriented investments	Multifunctional-oriented investments	%	N
weak  strong	1.	strong*	modest**	26	31
	2.	modest	modest	40	48
	3.	strong	strong	17	20
	4.	modest	strong	17	21

\* > €50,000 per year, \*\* €0 – 50,000

Table 5 is drawn from Oostindie et al. (2011b).

### Orientation group 1: Strong in production-oriented, modest in multifunctional activities (26%)

The first orientation group (26% of the sample) represents the least multifunctional-oriented farmers of the sample. As the multifunctional business activities remain ‘side-activities’, these farms can be positioned towards the weaker end of Wilson’s (2008) multifunctionality spectrum. Dominant motivations to start with multifunctional activities were rather economically driven covering ‘enlargement of business succession perspectives’ and ‘active external support to start new activities’. Dominant activities represented in this group are nature and landscape management and care farming. Not surprisingly, compared to the multifunctional share, their production-oriented turnover and family income is most substantial. The focus on production-oriented activities is furthermore illustrated by a relatively higher production-oriented labour force, increasing land use since the start of the multifunctional activities, and that more than the average number of respondents see international market developments as an important factor for further business development.

**Box 1:** Farm portrait orientation group 1

Due to their experience of taking care of an intellectually disabled son of relatives, Grace and Philip started care activities on their arable farm. Whereas Grace manages the care activities predominantly, because she worked as a nurse previously, Philip and their son fully focus on further development of the arable farm. Currently, Grace's successful care activities contribute significantly to the total farm income and therewith support further production-oriented development perspectives. As their son is particularly keen on the primary production, the future of the care activities is seen as depending fully on his future life partner.

Orientation group 2: Modest business investors in both (40%)

Comprising 40%, the second group forms the largest one of the sample. As the farmers represented here are characterised by modest investments in both production-oriented and multifunctional activities, they can be positioned around the centre of Wilson's (2008) multifunctionality spectrum. Dominant motives to start multifunctional activities were: 'using existing market opportunities', and 'the need for additional income'. In other words, motivations illustrating the ambition to continue farming as well as a curiosity for new multifunctional activities. As the average acreage used is relatively substantial, the group's modest investment strategy should not be seen as indicative for small-scale farming. However, the average production-oriented turnover stays slightly behind other groups and the multifunctional turnover and family income is also moderate. Dominant activities are care farming, nature and landscape conservation, often with agro-tourism as a starting activity. The total amount of labour is relatively lower and predominantly family-sourced. Whereas viewpoints about succession do not differ greatly from the other groups, slightly more farms are represented which lack successors or were the respondents think that succession will be problematic.

**Box 2:** Farm portrait orientation group 2

In 1992, Graham and Susan followed their colleagues by starting a small campsite on their arable farm. Many other farmers gained some additional income in tourism as the coastal area they are located in is very touristic. Gradually, the number of pitches increased and the campsite facilities were professionalised. Apart from the investments done in multifunctionality, the production-oriented activities were further developed by acquiring farm land and investments in mechanisation. Whereas the income generated by agro-tourism was additional in the early years, it currently contributes to the farm and family income substantially. The campsite is managed by Susan and her adult daughter who's family lives on the farm as well. Although their daughter still has a part-time job in a nearby town, she wishes to take over the farm in the near future.

### Orientation group 3: Strong business investors in both (17%)

As they show strong ambitions to develop their multifunctional business activities, the farmers represented by the third orientation group (17% of the sample) are increasingly moving towards the stronger end of Wilson's (2008) multifunctionality spectrum. However, despite their strong multifunctional orientation, production-oriented activities also seem to be an important part of their multifunctional business model. Important motivations to start multifunctional activities within this group were: 'risk spreading by developing multiple business activities' and 'more control on sales revenues'. Whereas the average turnover (production-oriented and multifunctional) is the most substantial out of all the groups, the multifunctional turnover and contribution to family income is not particularly distinctive. Interestingly, labour is increasingly sourced outside the farming family, these farms are thus increasingly opening up to new entrants. Dominant (starting) activities represented are farm shops, quality production and agro-tourism. Finally, despite the economic robustness of this group of farms, more often than in other groups, they expect that the combination of activities will eventually be a hindering factor in passing the farm on to the next generation.

#### Box 3: Farm portrait orientation group 3

Since 1990, Claire and Simon have invested greatly in the professionalisation of their farm shop and the processing of their cow's milk into farm cheese and other dairy products. Recently, the farm couple employed four full-time employees. Apart from the external employees, two of the couples' children recently joined the farm professionally. One of them is starting on-farm care activities. Recent production-oriented investments focussed on acquiring more milking quota and there are plans for a milking robot and improving animal housing. Whereas business succession is not an issue yet, both children are keen to take over the farm in due course. However, they first have to find ways to pass the elaborate combination of businesses created on to the next generation.

### Orientation group 4: Strong in multifunctional agriculture, modest in production-oriented activities (17%)

The respondents in group four (17% of the sample) clearly have the strongest multifunctional orientation and can therefore be positioned at the strong end of Wilson's (2008) multifunctionality spectrum. Their strong multifunctional orientation is mirrored by strong investments, and a higher than average turnover and contribution of multifunctionality to the family income. Interestingly,

these farms embarked relatively recently on the path to multifunctionality. In contrast to the other groups, farmers' motivations seem to stem more from idealism, as dominant motivations to start multifunctional activities were: 'more contact with civilians and consumers', 'more contact between agriculture and society' and 'inspiring examples in the region'. This group represents the relatively smaller farms, both in terms of production-oriented turnover and acreage. Dominant activities are: farm shops, quality production, agro-tourism, education and childcare. The strong multifunctional-orientation of this group is moreover reflected by the relatively high number of combined multifunctional activities, demonstrating that multifunctionality has become much more than a side-activity. Compared to the other groups, the relatively strong multifunctional orientation often appears hand in hand with the decreasing use of farm land and/or production-oriented turnover. In other words, compared to in the other groups, the development of multifunctionality is more often financed by selling land and/or production rights.

**Box 4: Farm portrait orientation group 4**

Paul and Helen started with a campsite and educational activities for primary school children on their dairy farm as they increasingly felt socially isolated after relocation. Gradually, the campsite was expanded with cabins and a small farm shop selling products from a care farm nearby. Due to the increasing economic importance of their multifunctional activities, the primary production was increasingly intensified. The milking cows and quota were sold and the money used to realise a professional meeting and party venue and to professionalise the farm shop. The future agricultural production will focus on the less intensive production of beef which is going to be marketed through their own network.

### **3.4.3. Main interactive learning activities undertaken**

Before going into the discriminative patterns found regarding the social capital used for entrepreneurial learning, we will first briefly elaborate on the social capital used for entrepreneurial learning by the total sample (N=120). The main interactive learning activities undertaken by the 120 farmers since the start of their new activities are presented by table 6.

**Table 6:** Ranking of interactive learning activities undertaken by farmers to a maximal degree since the start of their new business activities (N=120)

Learning/interaction activities Learning by...	% = maximal degree* (N=120)
Joining a multifunctional cooperative	71
Visiting/observing colleagues with similar business activities (other (multifunctional) farmers)	70
Consulting spouse and other family members for personal feedback	56
Exchanging information with colleagues during informal meetings (other (multifunctional) farmers)	51
Comparing practices with colleagues	50
Consulting colleagues for personal feedback	46
Discussing with professional advisers	41
Consulting our advisor for personal feedback	37
Observing/interacting with other rural entrepreneurs (non-farmers)	37
Consulting an expert to identify new opportunities	11

\* Respondents were asked to rate the learning activities above on a four point Likert scale: 1 = minimal degree – 4 = maximal degree.

Table 6 is drawn from Seuneke and Lans (2011).

Table 6 indicates that respondents have undertaken a broad range of interactive learning activities since they started their new business activities. The main activities undertaken are clearly: 1) *joining a multifunctional cooperative* (71%) and 2) *visiting/observing colleagues with similar business activities* (70%).

The most common activity, joining a multifunctional cooperative, refers to being a member of and participating in one of the many regional and national farmers' networks in The Netherlands which focus on the professionalisation of specific multifunctional business activities<sup>15</sup>. Many respondents joined and participated in one or more of these networks, each focussing on one of their multifunctional activities. Although the intensity of participation varied greatly among respondents, they generally highly valued being part of and participating in these networks for their learning. On the other hand, these networks were clearly seen as differing in the extent to which they provide rich learning environments. Moreover, as these cooperatives mainly consist of farmers involved in particular multifunctional business activities, they were also seen as rather homogeneous networks.

<sup>15</sup> In The Netherlands, multifunctional agriculture is strongly organised on activity level.

We see table 6 as an indication that the respondents represented by the sample prefer to interact with other (multifunctional) farmers (with similar activities) and family members rather than consulting professional advisers and interacting with other rural entrepreneurs. This suggests that interaction and learning is predominantly taking place 'close to home', drawing on bonding social capital embedded in agriculture and moreover focussed on similar multifunctional activities. This image is supported by the more qualitative motivations provided by respondents during the interviews, suggesting that farmers experience a barrier when crossing the boundaries of their direct environments in order to operate beyond the agricultural domain. Some farmers, for instance, told us that despite their motivation, they (initially) felt rather out of context interacting in non-farming networks.

#### **3.4.5. Multifunctional orientation and the nature of the social capital used for entrepreneurial learning**

When diversifying the data from table 6 in cross tabulations taking account of farmers' specific multifunctional orientations, meaningful differences in entrepreneurial learning and social interaction come to the fore (see table 7).

Overall, table 7 shows that more strongly multifunctional-oriented farmers (groups 3 and 4) score more highly on nearly all items. This suggests that both groups have interacted for learning more actively than the other groups. In other words, those farmers who are more strongly oriented towards the development of multifunctional business activities, seem the more active in terms of their interaction for learning.

These findings are mirrored by indications regarding the role of learning for further business development. More specifically, respondents from groups 3 and 4 were found to attribute relatively more value to the support and facilitation of their learning and further development of their own, their spouse's and their family members' expertise compared to their more weakly multifunctional-oriented counterparts.



**Table 7:** Multifunctional orientation groups and interactive learning activities undertaken by farmers to a maximal degree since the start of their new business activities (N=120)

Interactive learning activities	1 Strong in production- oriented, modest in MFA	2 Modest in both	3 Strong investors in both	4 Strong in MFA, modest in production- oriented activities
% = undertaken to a maximal degree*				
Learning by...				
<b>Distribution in the sample N=120 (100%)</b>	<b>31 (26%)</b>	<b>48 (40%)</b>	<b>20 (17%)</b>	<b>21 (17%)</b>
Joining a multifunctional cooperative	71	61	72	90
Visiting/observing colleagues with similar business activities (other (multifunctional) farmers)	65	68	76	75
Consulting spouse and other family members for personal feedback	52	42	81	45
Exchanging information with colleagues during informal meetings (other (multifunctional) farmers)	42	50	52	60
Comparing practices with colleagues	48	41	57	65
Consulting colleagues for personal feedback	42	33	47	60
Discussing with professional advisers	32	31	52	65
Consulting our adviser for personal feedback	48	29	38	55
Observing/interacting with other rural entrepreneurs (non-farmers)	39	29	62	45
Consulting an expert to identify new opportunities	16	15	5	20

\* Respondents were asked to rate the learning activities above on a four point Likert scale: 1 = minimal degree – 4 = maximal degree.

Furthermore, apart from interacting more actively, the scores in table 7 suggest that the more strongly multifunctional-oriented farmers (groups 3 and 4) are drawing on rather different social capital for entrepreneurial learning. Although discriminating only slightly, the different scores suggest that the farmers represented by groups 3 and 4 increasingly interact with professional advisers and other rural entrepreneurs. The interaction with these particular social ties is seen here as an indication that these farmers are increasingly breaking with the dominant learning and interaction behaviour as discussed in section 3.4.3. In other words, whereas weakly and moderately multifunctional-oriented farmers (groups 1 and 2) tend to stay ‘close to home’ and draw on *bonding* social capital, their more strongly multifunctional-oriented counterparts seem to be broadening their horizons by drawing increasingly on *bridging* social capital, providing access to new learning environments outside the agricultural domain.

Non-farming bridging social capital is crucial in this context as it exposes farmers to new and different ideas and perspectives and therewith fosters entrepreneurial learning.

Notably, earlier work-experience may be an important explanatory factor in this respect as the most strongly multifunctional-oriented farmers (group 4) were found to have more work experience outside agriculture compared to the others, and moreover strongly argued that their previous work-experiences was an important asset with regard to the development of their new businesses.

Although not specifically focussing on learning, the data regarding the perceived importance of cooperation with a diversity of business partners provides some support to our findings as well (see table 8).

**Table 8:** Multifunctional orientation groups and the perceived importance of partners for further business development (N=120)

<b>Business partners</b>	<b>1</b> <b>Strong in</b> <b>production-</b> <b>oriented,</b> <b>modest in MFA</b>	<b>2</b> <b>Modest in</b> <b>both</b>	<b>3</b> <b>Strong</b> <b>investors in</b> <b>both</b>	<b>4</b> <b>Strong in</b> <b>MFA, modest</b> <b>in production-</b> <b>oriented activities</b>
<b>% (very) important business partner</b>				
<b>Distribution in the sample</b> <b>N=120 (100%)</b>	<b>31 (26%)</b>	<b>48 (40%)</b>	<b>20 (17%)</b>	<b>21 (17%)</b>
Local governments	68	56	71	84
Other multifunctional farmers, within own region	52	32	52	70
New market partners / customers / suppliers	42	41	67	47
Regional knowledge institutions	48	30	57	55
Other rural entrepreneurs, within own region	45	27	53	50
Nature organisations	48	33	29	42
National knowledge institutions	39	18	38	50
Other multifunctional farmers / rural entrepreneurs, outside own region	26	21	35	35

\* Respondents were asked to rate the learning activities above on a four point Likert scale: 1 = minimal degree – 4 = maximal degree.

Table 8 shows some further differences with regard to the business partners considered important for further business development by the four orientation groups. In general, it is shown clearly once again that the more strongly multifunctional-oriented farmers represented by the sample (groups

3 and 4) attribute more value to cooperation with a wide variety of business partners, compared to the other two groups. More significant, however, is that the more strongly multifunctional farmers (groups 3 and 4) value cooperating specifically with partners outside agriculture more highly, these including local governments, new market partners/customers and other rural entrepreneurs within and outside their own region. In addition, better cooperation with other rural entrepreneurs is seen by these farmers as an important factor for the development of their businesses as demonstrated by another item from the questionnaire. Again, we see these results as a strong indication that more strongly multifunctional-oriented farmers are increasingly breaking with the dominant learning and interaction behavioural norm, as discussed in section 3.4.3.

### 3.5. Conclusions and discussion

This study explored the relationship between specific forms of multifunctional farming and the nature of the social capital the farmers use for entrepreneurial learning. First and foremost, our results show that, overall, interactive learning is predominantly taking place 'close to home', the farmers predominantly drawing on *bonding* social capital embedded in agriculture and focussed on similar multifunctional activities. Drawing on *bridging* social capital, going beyond farmers' direct social circle and agricultural domain, was found to be undertaken rarely by the farmers since the start of their new business activities, despite the learning potential it could have.

When diversifying the data, taking account of farmers' specific multifunctional-orientations, meaningful differences in entrepreneurial learning and the nature of the social capital used came to light.

The more strongly multifunctional farmers were found to interact with others for learning more actively. In other words, the stronger the farmers' orientation towards the development of multifunctional business activities, the more actively they seem to interact with others for entrepreneurial learning.

Moreover, indications were found that the more strongly multifunctional-oriented farmers (groups 3 and 4) increasingly interact beyond their direct environments. More specifically, whereas weakly and moderately multifunctional-oriented farmers (groups 1 and 2) tend to stay 'close to home'

drawing on *bonding* social capital, their more strongly multifunctional-oriented counterparts seem to be increasingly broadening their horizons by drawing on *bridging* social capital, providing access to new learning environments outside the agricultural domain. Non-farming bridging social capital is crucial in this context as it exposes farmers to new and different ideas and perspectives and thereby fostering entrepreneurial learning (Gielen et al., 2003a; Seuneke et al., 2013).

Explanations for the relations indicated can be found in the portraits of the different orientation groups presented in this chapter (paragraph 3.4.2.). In contrast to their more weakly multifunctional-oriented counterparts (groups 1 and 2), the more strongly multifunctional-oriented farmers (groups 3 and 4) see multifunctional agriculture clearly as their future. The creation of more elaborate rural enterprises with multiple, integrated, on-farm businesses and the employment of externals is likely to mean that these farmers are strongly motivated to invest in the further development of their new non-farming business activities.

However, a deeper explanation – related to the path dependencies of the post-war production-oriented modernisation process (Wilson, 2008) – lies beneath. It was argued that after decades of agricultural modernisation, farmers became locked in a highly specialised socio-cultural, technical and economical regime which was mainly focussed on the maximisation of production (Ward, 1993; Wilson, 2008). As earlier mentioned, Burton and Wilson (2006) for instance demonstrated that despite the development of new multifunctional business activities, farmers' self-conceptualisations are still deeply rooted in the productivist model of agriculture. It is believed that the legacy of the post-war agricultural modernisation also maintains its hold on the farmers represented in our study. The production-oriented norms will challenge them to assume new identities, develop their multifunctional activities and therefore to cross their socio-cultural and technical boundaries by exploring new non-farming social networks. The more strongly multifunctional-oriented farmers identified in this study (groups 3 and 4) tend on average, however, to be freer of the old model. They seem to have the motivation and experience that 'good entrepreneurship' goes well beyond production-oriented thought and action. As they have acquired increasing self-confidence, skills and belief in their new strategy, they have managed to assume new identities, break free from productivist norms and take risks towards developing multifunctionality.

As more strongly multifunctional-oriented farmers seem to increasingly cross the boundaries of the agricultural domain, their behaviours appear

promising for development towards a more entrepreneurial and multifunctional agriculture. However, as the strongly multifunctional-oriented farmers represent only 34% of the sample, the majority (66%) of the sample still relies primarily on social capital based on strong and familiar ties.

Whilst multifunctional farmers' dominant mode of interaction and learning, relying predominantly on bonding social capital, may be 'sufficient' in more weakly multifunctional-oriented contexts, there are strong arguments to suggest that relying overly on bonding social capital may become a hindrance to learning and change (Hite and Hesterly, 2001; Ruef, 2002; Uzzi, 1997). Relying on bonding social capital moreover contradicts the essence of entrepreneurial learning, which is all about exploring, connecting and interacting with new networks (Cope, 2005; Corbett, 2005; Politis, 2005; Rae, 2006). Therefore – provided that farmers are motivated enough to develop multifunctional activities in the first place – stimulating their ability to expose themselves to new learning environments and to cross and operate beyond their sectoral boundaries will be a major challenge with regard to fostering entrepreneurship and the development of stronger degrees of farm-level multifunctionality in the future.

To conclude, the differences in the nature of the social capital used for entrepreneurial learning between more weakly or strongly multifunctional-oriented farmers, demonstrate that farmers' particular multifunctional orientation is an important factor in understanding entrepreneurial learning in this context. In other words, multifunctional farmers represent a highly diverse group of actors driven by different combinations of multifunctional thought and action. They employ different entrepreneurial learning strategies, and have different needs with regard to fostering entrepreneurship and the development of stronger degrees of farm-level multifunctionality. With regard to practice, this is a crucial message as to date, more finely tailored approaches to support and education are still lacking.

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## Chapter 4

**The two-sided relationship  
between entrepreneurs and  
their work environments:  
a situated perspective on  
entrepreneurial learning  
in small agricultural family  
businesses**





#### 4. The two-sided relationship between entrepreneurs and their work environments: a situated perspective on entrepreneurial learning in small agricultural family businesses

### Abstract

This chapter examines the relationship between entrepreneurial learning and the context of the highly dynamic small business in which it proceeds. We draw on in-depth interviews held among the growing group of European farmers who, by developing new non-farming businesses on their existing farms, are transforming their small production-oriented family farms into multifunctional rural enterprises. Central to this chapter is an exploration of work environments, characterised by different levels of on-farm multifunctionality which represent different work conditions and learning environments in the rural enterprises. Our findings reveal the complex interaction between the owner-managers, their work, learning and the work environment in a specific and profoundly changing context. The contrasting socio-cultural, technical and organisational characteristics of ‘weak’ and ‘strong’ multifunctionality clearly shape entrepreneurial learning, which in turn affects the work environment which is providing different opportunities for learning. This study contributes towards improving the understanding of entrepreneurial learning as a highly work-related and situated phenomenon by exploring the complex dual relationship it has with its context. The two-sided relationship between entrepreneurs and their work environments finally underlines the potential for improving their capacity to create richer learning contexts.

4

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## 4.1. Introduction

Entrepreneurial learning has become an important concept in recent small business entrepreneurship literature (Wang and Chugh, 2013). In this study, entrepreneurial learning is seen as a distinct form of work-related learning which takes place in emerging entrepreneurial settings. Here, we consider entrepreneurial learning in contexts of emerging entrepreneurship and manifested by the daily, work-related and joint learning process through which emerging entrepreneurs acquire the identities, propensity, knowledge and skills required to identify, start and develop new business activities.

Entrepreneurial learning has been studied in many contexts and approached from many different perspectives (Wang and Chugh, 2013). In the growing body of literature on entrepreneurial learning, two major approaches can be identified. Whereas the early studies approached entrepreneurial learning predominantly from an individual and cognitive perspective (Cope, 2003, 2005; Corbett, 2005; Deakins and Freel, 1998; Rae and Carswell, 2000), an increasing number of studies considers entrepreneurial learning more in the relation to its social and cultural context (Hamilton, 2011; Karataş-Özkan, 2011; Lans et al., 2008; Rae, 2006). In contrast to the former, the latter see entrepreneurial learning not only as something happening in the learners' head, but rather as something which proceeds in close connection with the social dynamics of the work environment. In other words, entrepreneurial learning is learning through participation (Sfard, 1998).

Although the research which has applied this more situated approach has greatly contributed to the understanding of entrepreneurial learning as embedded and affected by entrepreneurs' social and cultural context, we still know surprisingly little about its relationship with the work environment. More specifically, in a study among Dutch glasshouse horticulturists, Lans et al. (2008) suggested that there is a two-sided interaction effect between owner-managers and the work environment they engage in. According to the authors: "Entrepreneurial learning is influenced by the work environment the learner engages in. At the same time, the work environment is (partly) (re)shaped by the entrepreneur and, therefore, indirectly effects entrepreneurial learning" (p. 610). From this perspective, learning entrepreneurs are not passive recipients of the learning opportunities afforded to them (Billet, 2001) but rather active agents who, through the entrepreneurial process of recognising and developing

new business activities (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000), shape their work environments as learning contexts. The reshaped learning environments impact in turn upon their learning. This study follows this perspective by examining the two-sided relationship in a particular kind of highly dynamic and changing small entrepreneurial businesses.

Our exploration draws on a specific group of emerging small business entrepreneurs operating in agriculture. We focus on the increasing number of European farmers who, over the past decades, have started new non-farming income-generating business activities on their existing farms (Eurostat, 2013). Aside from the traditional agricultural production, these farmers have started business activities such as bed and breakfasts, tourist activities, processing and/or marketing of farm products, providing (child)care services and so on (Alsos et al., 2003; Bock, 2004; Hassink et al., 2012; Haugen and Vik, 2008). Such strategies are highly valued as they represent an increase in opportunities for survival in times of ongoing globalisation and liberalisation of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy, and contribute to the development of a more diversified rural economy (Ploeg et al., 2002).

The case of multifunctional agriculture provides an interesting context in which to study entrepreneurial learning as the development of new non-farming businesses brings about profound changes in farmers' work and work environments. From being mainly focussed on the production of food and fibres, farmers are developing new business activities which go beyond mass food production (Wilson, 2008). Consequently, farmers have to develop new identities, knowledge, skills, networks and, moreover, need increasingly to become more entrepreneurial (Alsos and Carter, 2006; Burton and Wilson, 2006; Gielen et al., 2003b; Haugen and Vik, 2008; McElwee et al., 2006; Pyysiäinen et al., 2006). Our analysis of the two-sided relationship between entrepreneurial learning and its context is based on a comparison between farm cases representing '*weak*' and '*strong*' degrees of farm-level multifunctionality (Wilson, 2008). Whereas weakly multifunctional farms are typically production-oriented family farms with an additional side-activity, strongly multifunctional ones have developed into elaborate rural enterprises with multiple integrated businesses. Weak and strong multifunctional farms represent different work conditions and environments in these small family businesses.

The remainder of this chapter is structured as follows. In the next section we elaborate on how we approached entrepreneurial learning and the

two-sided relationship it has with its context. We will then describe the methods used for this study; these include the empirical basis, selection of weak and strong multifunctional cases, data collection and the comparative analysis. Subsequently, we will present the main findings, offer our conclusions and summarise the main theoretical contribution of this study.

## 4.2. Entrepreneurial learning and the two-sided relationship with the work environment

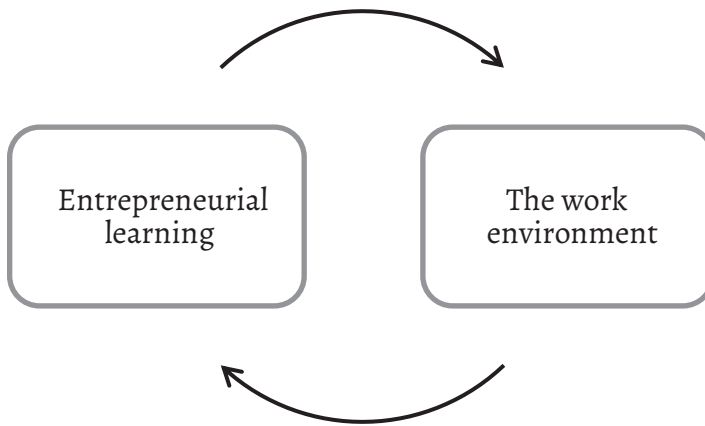
The shift towards multifunctionality substantially changes farmers' role in agriculture and requires them to develop new identities, knowledge, skills and networks (Alsos and Carter, 2006; Burton and Wilson, 2006; McElwee et al., 2006). Key in this transition, however, is the development of entrepreneurship (Carter, 2001; Clark, 2009; Haugen and Vik, 2008). Whilst they used to operate as producers in a highly regulated and protected economic system, the development of new and non-farming business activities on their existing farms means farmers must re-orient, moving beyond those practices which were taken for granted and developing entrepreneurial behaviours (Morgan et al., 2010; Vesala and Vesala, 2010). In the present study, the development of entrepreneurship is seen as a process of *entrepreneurial learning*. We use the concept to understand the daily, work-related and joint learning process through which farmers acquire the identities, propensity, knowledge and skills required to start, develop and integrate new multifunctional business activities into their farms. In other words, it is the learning process which takes place during daily entrepreneurial performance and through which farm men, women and their families develop their entrepreneurship and transform their farms into multifunctional rural enterprises.

In the vast amount of literature on the subject, it can be said in broad terms that entrepreneurial learning has been approached from two major perspectives. The early studies are strongly rooted in work such as Kolb's (1984), on 'experiential learning' and describe entrepreneurial learning mainly as an individual and cognitive phenomenon taking place in the entrepreneur's head (Cope, 2003, 2005; Cope and Watts, 2000; Corbett, 2005; Deakins and Freel, 1998; Dutta and Crossan, 2005; Lumpkin and Lichtenstein, 2005; Rae and Carswell, 2000). Cope and Watts (2000) for instance describe entrepreneurial learning as an informal, experiential, unconscious and accidental process which is often triggered by

‘critical incidents’. The second body of literature draws intensively on Lave and Wenger’s (1991) notion of ‘situated learning’ and Wenger’s (1998) ‘communities of practice’ to describe entrepreneurial learning less individually and cognitively but rather more in relation to its social and cultural context (Hamilton, 2011; Karataş-Özkan, 2011; Lans et al., 2008; Rae, 2006). Rae (2006), for instance, describes entrepreneurial learning as a process of participation, interaction and negotiation: “Through situated experience and social relationships people learn intuitively and may develop the ability to recognise opportunities. Such learning connects personal emergence with the negotiation of the enterprise; people are in process of learning in their social context ‘who they can become’ and ‘how to work with others to achieve their ends’ as well as the realism of ‘what can and what cannot be’” (p. 47).

Taking the situated perspective as the point of departure for this study, we assert that entrepreneurial learning can only be understood when examined in relation to its context or the specific work environment in which it proceeds (Hamilton, 2011). Small business work environments have for example been demonstrated to vary greatly in the way they support entrepreneurial learning (Lans et al., 2008). Crucial in fostering work-related types of learning, according to Billet (2001), are *direct guidance and support*. The author argues that direct guidance and support, often provided by more experienced or skilled persons, can generate insights which would not be learned by discovery alone (Billet, 2001). Drawing on small business contexts, Lans et al. (2008) identified *support and guidance* provided by sparring partners, within and outside the organisation, as the most important factors fostering entrepreneurial learning. The entrepreneurs in the study, operating in Dutch glasshouse horticulture, pointed at internal support such as that from family and critical co-workers, and external support from peers, study groups, more experienced colleagues and knowledge brokers such as salesmen and students as being crucial factors/agents in stimulating their learning. Other important factors identified as fostering entrepreneurial learning in this context are (in order of importance): *external interaction* with people outside the organisation, *internal communication* inside the organisation and finally the owner-managers’ *task characteristics*. With regard to the latter, Lans et al. (2008) argue that entrepreneurial learning requires ‘space’ for learning and development in the entrepreneurial rather than in the craftsman and/or managerial role.

Although we have obtained a better understanding how the work environment affects entrepreneurial learning, we still know relatively little about what is suggested as being the *two-sided relationship* between learning and the work environment (Lans et al., 2008; Rae, 2006). In entrepreneurial settings, learning is not only embedded and influenced by the socio-cultural dynamics of the work environment, but indeed also shapes and affects the development of the overall business as a learning environment (Young and Sexton, 2003). Key here is that entrepreneurial learning proceeds through the entrepreneurial process of recognising new opportunities and building them as new businesses (Cope, 2005). This means that the learning potential of the work environment is not a static reality but rather something which is actively altered by the daily thoughts and actions of the owner-manager(s) building their businesses. Consequently, this evolving work environment potentially provides different opportunities for learning which in turn affect entrepreneurial learning itself. This two-sided relationship is illustrated by figure 3.



**Figure 3:** The two-sided relationship between entrepreneurial learning and the work environment.

Rather implicitly, Rae (2006) seems to point at this two-sided relationship in his triadic model of entrepreneurial learning (p. 43). Focussing on cases of emerging entrepreneurship, the author starts by stating that in order to become an entrepreneur, people need to identify themselves as entrepreneurs. This process he calls ‘the personal and social emergence of entrepreneurial identity’. A second theme describes the process of ‘contextual learning’ which refers to

the process of social interaction and participation taking place in the work environment and through which entrepreneurs acquire the skills and ideas to recognise new business opportunities. With the third theme, ‘the negotiated enterprise’, Rae (2006) finally refers to the negotiations and social learning occurring and points at the way in which entrepreneurial learning is likely to alter the social context of entrepreneurs and their role in the organisation (the work environment). The ‘engagement in new networks of external relationships’ (theme two) and the ‘changing roles over time’ (theme three) are seen in the present study as processes which particularly transform the work environment and by so doing, also impact upon entrepreneurial learning. Thus, from this point of view, entrepreneurial learning shapes the work environment, in turn effecting entrepreneurial learning.

To sum up, the shift towards multifunctional entrepreneurship by the owner-managers central in this study is seen as proceeding through a process of entrepreneurial learning (Rae, 2006). Whereas often approached as an individual and cognitive process, in this study entrepreneurial learning is seen as a socially situated or embedded phenomenon (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). In order to contribute towards this particular perspective on entrepreneurial learning, this chapter explores the two-sided relationship that this specific type of work-related learning has with the work environment (Lans et al., 2008). We will continue this chapter with a description of the methods used in this study: its empirical basis, the characteristics of weak and strong multifunctionality, data collection and the comparative analysis.

### 4.3. Method

This study draws on empirical work done in the context of a Dutch research project exploring the ‘dynamics and robustness’ of multifunctional agriculture in The Netherlands. In this project, 120 multifunctional farmers, involved in different combinations of production and multifunctional-oriented activities, and located throughout the country, were visited and interviewed<sup>16</sup>.

In a second empirical phase of the project, additional in-depth interviews were held with the owner-managers<sup>17</sup> of eighteen cases. The interviews aimed

<sup>16</sup> For a detailed description of the overarching research project, see (Oostindie et al., 2011b) and chapter one of this thesis.

<sup>17</sup> In this chapter we will use the term ‘owner-managers’ to refer to the respondents.

to deepen our understandings of entrepreneurial learning and to explore the differences between ‘weak’ and ‘strong’ multifunctional work environments (Wilson, 2008). Therefore, a sub-sample was drawn consisting of nine relatively weak and nine relatively strong multifunctional cases (N=120, N=18: 9 weak and 9 strong).

The selection of weak and strong multifunctional cases was based on Wilson’s (2008) normative conceptualisation of farm-level multifunctionality, distinguishing between weak and strong degrees which represent different work conditions and environments. The main characteristics of weak and strong multifunctionality, as used in the selection procedure, are summarised in table 9. Box 5 and 6 characterise moreover a ‘weakly’ and ‘strongly’ multifunctional farm<sup>18</sup>.

**Table 9:** Main characteristics of weak and strong multifunctional cases

<b>Weak multifunctionality</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Strong multifunctionality</b>
Production-oriented farm with a side activity		Rural enterprise with multiple integrated businesses
Focussed on the production of food and fibres	<b>Farm development orientation (thought and action)</b>	Focussed on total (multifunctional + production) or more on multifunctionality
Less	<b>Number of new activities</b>	More
Multifunctionality is a ‘side activity’	<b>Integration of activities (multifunctional and production-oriented)</b>	Multifunctional and production-oriented activities are more synergetic
Separated	<b>Work environment</b>	More shared
Side activities often managed by farm women		Family and external staff
Predominantly family sourced	<b>Labour</b>	Increasingly externally sourced

Table 9 is drawn from Seunke and Lans (2011).

**Box 5:** A relatively weak multifunctional farm

In 2006, Tom and Sue converted an unused part of their dairy farm in order to start a small-scale bed and breakfast. An important motivation in starting was to generate some more income, to create more social dynamics on the farm and to educate citizens about farming. Aside from their tourist activities, they have been participating in a meadow bird protection scheme for many years. The bed and breakfast is mainly managed by Sue and is clearly regarded as a side activity. Because their eldest son is passionate about dairy farming, and cares little about his mothers’ activities, future investments focus on the development of the dairy farm. The future of the bed and breakfast is therefore uncertain.

<sup>18</sup> Both portraits are based on two of the sampled cases.



**Box 6:** A relatively strong multifunctional farm

Both Fiona and Ben were convinced that their organic fruit farm, located in the fringe of a provincial city, would provide an excellent context to help mentally disabled people. In 2003, Fiona gave up her nursing job in a care institution and started providing care to a small number of clients on their farm. Gradually, the care activities grew and became increasingly integrated with the agricultural production. As well as their care activities, the couple started a farm shop, selling their own and regional products, and a café which attracts many day tourists exploring the attractive surroundings of the nearby towns. In all activities, the (care) clients have an important managing role. Due to the new activities, and the complexity of the farm, they started employing some care professionals and staff for the shop and café. The farm has also attracted some enthusiastic locals who volunteer on the farm. Their daughter, who is employed part-time by her parents as well as studying, has the ambition to take over the running of the farm in the near future.

The eighteen cases studied were selected as they provided rich data for the examination of entrepreneurial learning in weak and strong multifunctional contexts. It is also important to stress that they represent a diverse range of Dutch farm-level multifunctionality. The owner-managers are engaged in production and multifunctional-oriented activities which, for The Netherlands, are common and are located throughout the country. All cases are family farms, meaning that they are being owned, managed by and passed on through the family (Gasson et al., 1988; Jervell, 2011).

Important sources of data used for this study were the additional in-depth interviews carried out with the owner-managers of the eighteen selected multifunctional cases. The data from the more quantitative interviews, held during the overarching research project (see chapter one and three), provided a detailed background to further contextualise our findings. The interviews were undertaken in March 2011 and, like the interviews from the earlier phase, took place on respondents' farms. The interviews were mainly held with individual owner-managers, but in some cases with the couple running the farm. They took approximately two hours each, were audio-recorded and extensive field notes were taken. For more details about the questionnaire, see Appendix 3.

The analysis was based on a comparison between 'weak' and 'strong' multifunctional cases representing different work conditions and environments (see table 9). The comparison aimed to characterise entrepreneurial learning and to explore the complex and dual relationship it has with its context. The exploration started at the point of the owner-managers by exploring how they, along with their families, shape entrepreneurial learning. Following this, through looking into their learning activities and networks we examined their learning environments in order to understand how the environments foster learning. As we dealt with a relatively small number of cases which were familiar to us through

the previous interviews undertaken in the overarching ‘dynamics and robustness’ research project, the analysis was done manually and in a straightforward way.

The cases were first divided into one of two categories, namely of either weak or strong multifunctionality. Each case was then thoroughly studied by going through the data collected in both phases of the research project: the quantitative data from the first series of interviews (see chapter three), the field notes, and the audio recordings from the additional in-depth interviews. The differences in learning and its relationship with the context were then processed into an analytical scheme which forms the basis of this chapter (see section 4.5., table 10).

## 4.4. Findings

In this section we will present how the two-sided relationship between entrepreneurial learning and the work environment was manifested in the cases studied<sup>19</sup>. We begin the analysis by looking at the owner-managers and discussing how they shape entrepreneurial learning in weak and strong multifunctional contexts. Following this, we will explore the interactive learning activities engaged in and then proceed by how the different work environments are (re) shaped and in turn seem to impact learning.

### 4.4.1. The owner-managers’ multifunctional orientation and learning

The status given to the multifunctional activities was found to be fundamental to understanding learning and the work environment in both contexts. In weaker cases, the new activities were often explicitly positioned as “side activities”. As the farm remains a production-oriented unit in these cases, the multifunctional activities are additional and often supportive to the agricultural production. In stronger contexts, the new activities are strongly integrated with the production-oriented activities. Further development of the new activities is generally seen as the main objective for the future and seems to stimulate much agency towards development and hence participation and learning.

The following interview fragment illustrates how the owner-managers of weaker cases often positioned their side activity: they enjoy it, and it supports the family income, but it should not become too elaborate.

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<sup>19</sup> Parts of this section are drawn from the analysis reported in Seuneke and Lans (2011).

*“The dairy farm has to stay in business, seven days a week. The dairy farm should not suffer from our new activities. Further development would keep you off your normal job; you’d have to hire people and all that. No, we don’t want our side activity to become a business in itself”.*

The specific position of multifunctionality in weak and strong cases was found to be important in understanding the position of entrepreneurial learning and the nature of the work environment in both contexts. The degree of the owner-managers’ engagement in and orientation towards multifunctionality determines their multifunctional identity and their agency towards entrepreneurial learning.

The owner-managers’ awareness of learning seemed to be different in both contexts. Compared to strongly multifunctional-oriented owner-managers, weakly multifunctional-oriented ones seemed to be less aware of their learning. Reflecting on learning during the interviews was often more problematic. Moreover, respondents predominantly perceived learning as something distant from their daily work: taking place only in classrooms and guided by teachers.

In addition, for weakly multifunctional-oriented owner-managers, their learning was observed to be relatively less self-directed. Compared to their strongly multifunctional-oriented counterparts, this group tended to expect external support and guidance from the traditional agricultural knowledge institutions such as the farmers’ unions and the government. In contrast, strongly multifunctional owner-managers were found to increasingly lead their own learning process.

Finally, much of the learning in weaker cases was taking place during the knowledge-intensive start-up of new activities. In later phases when the activities were up and running, activities such as networking, participating and interacting were clearly considered as less important. In these cases, the owner-managers seemed to rely more on routines. Stronger multifunctional-oriented owner-managers, in contrast, expressed a more constant need for learning and development.

Together, the status of multifunctionality in the stronger cases clearly shapes learning and leads to a more pro-active attitude towards participation and learning. In contrast to those in weaker environments, the stronger multifunctional owner-managers seemed to be increasingly questioning existing practices, continued experimenting and reflecting, and managed their own learning process. Their learning leads to organisational transformations and

contributes to the development of stronger and richer learning environments providing more opportunities for learning.

#### 4.4.2. Role division, learning and the work environment

Role division was found to differ greatly between weak and strong contexts and seemed to affect the learning potential of the work environment.

In the weaker cases, work is often strictly divided among the farm couple and other family members. Moreover, the roles are strongly divided according to rather traditional gender patterns: the men generally lead the agricultural production, while the women typically lead the development of the multifunctional activities. The women combine the development of the new activities, multi-tasking between taking care of the family and household, farm jobs and the overall farm administration.

In the following interview fragment, a female owner-manager involved in agro-tourism illustrates how the division of tasks and responsibilities directly restricts the opportunities available for participation and learning, in this case to create a joint learning process.

*“There is a clear division of roles on the farm: I’m responsible for the new activities [the bed and breakfast], he [she points at her husband, present in the room] runs the farm. As well as my own administration, I’m doing his. It’s not that he’s not interested but the meetings, and the other activities, [she participates in a local agro-tourism network] often conflict with his work. He’s not finished before eight, the time our meetings often start at.”*

In addition, the dominant gendered role division and learning in weaker contexts was found to be cross-generational. In some cases, the future of the side activities heavily depends on the couple’s son finding a partner willing to take over the side activities. Interestingly, when the absence of a suitable partner threatened the future of the new activities, respondents consequently demonstrated lesser degrees of agency towards participation and learning.

In contrast, in stronger cases identifying the main person responsible for the development of the multifunctional activities was more complex. Here, the development of the new businesses is also seen less strictly as the woman’s domain. The responsibilities regarding the new activities are shared more among partners and other family members.

The following fragment illustrates how a strongly multifunctional-oriented owner-manager, involved in dairy farming and on-farm childcare, cooperates with his wife:

*“We try to think in the same direction, we often discuss the things we have learned, how we deal with things. Off course, we don’t do everything jointly, we clearly agreed: you’re doing that, I’m doing this. We have to, or we’re burned-out before we know it. I also learned to do the things I like to do most. It’s funny actually, my wife doesn’t like the things I like and vice versa. We’re really complementary.”*

To conclude, the differences in role division in both contexts seem to create different learning environments. Whereas learning in weaker contexts seemed to be rather individual and separated, it appears to have become more shared and synergetic in the stronger multifunctional cases. In turn, such shared and synergetic learning processes provide more opportunities for learning and improve the richness of the work environment supporting learning, for instance by providing more guidance and support (Lans et al., 2008).

#### 4.4.3. Learning activities and environments

Weak and strong multifunctional owner-managers were found to undertake and prefer different learning activities and thereby operate in and create learning environments which provide different opportunities for learning.

As described above, the development of new on-farm businesses has a relatively low strategic importance in weaker multifunctional contexts. Often, the owner-managers do not want the side-activities to become businesses in their own right. The learning activities undertaken tend, consequently, to be only those which are easily accessible and non-committal, such as consulting family members and friends or observing colleagues.

In the following fragment, a respondent reflects on the learning activities she has undertaken.

*“Well, how have we learned that? Well...I think it just happens. You see, you have your contacts. We have been observing colleagues a lot: how do they do it? You know how these things go.”*

In contrast to the strongly multifunctional-oriented owner-managers, the weakly multifunctional-oriented ones were found to rely predominantly on the networks they have already acquired. They also prefer to operate in familiar contexts: interacting with family, friends, acquaintances and other (multifunctional) farmers. Moreover, the owner-managers have a strong sectoral focus, tending to interact primarily with people operating in agriculture. Weaker multifunctional-oriented owner-managers seem to derive their identities predominantly from production-oriented farming, and their orientation makes them reluctant to use and create strongly multifunctional-oriented networks.

The following fragment clearly illustrates the sense of mismatch between a weakly multifunctional-oriented farmer and a strong multifunctional-oriented network.

*“The municipality organises networking meetings for local entrepreneurs. We attended some of these meetings. Very interesting meetings indeed but we’re not going any more. You see, we really feel out of place as farmers among normal recreational entrepreneurs. Maybe we’re not at this level yet, or we need to get more outspoken, that might be the case. Our neighbour across the street, he owns a campsite with a marina, he’s a regular there [at the meetings] and keeps us posted.”*

In contrast, among the strongly multifunctional owner-managers, a greater willingness was found to leave their direct and trusted environments in order to participate in learning, increasingly crossing the boundaries of the agricultural domain to connect with and operate in non-agricultural networks. Their particular agency can be explained by their changing identity as the owner-managers of stronger cases were found to identify themselves increasingly with rural entrepreneurs in general rather than specifically with agriculturalists.

*“Being entrepreneurial is fantastic. It’s me who’s in the driving seat now. You can explore things yourself. You always can decide: I’m doing this, I’m not doing that. It’s a great feeling!”*

Taken together, these findings clearly illustrate that the stronger multifunctional-oriented owner-managers have stronger multifunctional identities and show a stronger drive towards entrepreneurial learning. By

increasingly crossing the boundaries of the agricultural domain, they create stronger and richer learning-environments, in turn fostering the development of entrepreneurship and stronger degrees of farm-level multifunctionality.

#### 4.4.4. Creating richer learning environments

Due to a number of specific and profound changes to work and the work environment, stronger multifunctional-oriented owner-managers seem to create stronger and richer learning environments that provide more opportunities for learning.

In the weaker contexts, owner-managers operate in small, family-managed and often rather labour intensive production-oriented farms. Due to a limited availability of labour, weaker multifunctional work environments provide limited room for participation and learning. The women, who in the majority of the weakly multifunctional cases are the ones who are leading the development of the new businesses, struggle particularly in this respect. The combination of managing and developing the multifunctional activities as well as taking care of the family and household, farm jobs and overall farm administration, allows them insufficient room for manoeuvre.

The following interview fragment clearly illustrates the tensions experienced by these women.

*“It’s very informative and all that [to stay updated], but you know what the problem is? Time. I’m juggling all day long, it sometimes drives me mad, you know? I’m constantly being interrupted with everything.”*

The stronger cases, in contrast, were found to provide more opportunities for learning. Important processes in this respect are the introduction of external labour and the re-organisation of farm work.

Stronger multifunctional owner-managers were found to increasingly ‘open up the family farm’ by introducing externals such as paid professionals, volunteers, apprentices and so on. The introduction of externals affords farmers to delegate more work and to create more room for participation and learning.

The process of opening up the family farm was found to radically change the owner-managers’ work and work environment, redefining their roles and position in the organisation. Previously used to doing most of the work themselves, they now had to take a step back and delegate more tasks to create more room for manoeuvre.

Creating more room for manoeuvre was found not to be self-evident. Some of the owner-managers reported having felt uncomfortable leaving a considerable amount of work to others. Moreover, creating more room for manoeuvre required the owner-managers to re-define 'work'. For example, as networking does not involve any physical labour, it was not seen as 'working' initially. The following fragment illustrates how an owner-manager involved in dairy farming learned to allow himself more room for manoeuvre.

*"Now everything [the multifunctional activities] has become so elaborate, I'm increasingly outsourcing simple tasks. At one moment I noticed I got behind answering emails. Really, work was piling up. Then I sat down and realised things had to change. I learned to delegate more work: can you finish this? Can you manage the bookings?"*

Alongside creating more room for manoeuvre, the introduction of externals was found to contribute to the richness of the work environment as a learning context by changing the social fabric and dynamics of the farm. By opening up, family-managed farms have become larger, more dynamic and more socially heterogeneous rural enterprises. Moreover, new entrants also introduce new knowledge, experiences, skills, networks and viewpoints into the farm. Rather than considering externals as a burden and a threat to autonomy, strongly multifunctional owner-managers tend to have learned to see newcomers as valuable human resources and a stimulant for a joint learning process.

Finally, the re-organisation and in some cases phasing out of labour-intensive, production-oriented farm work was also found to contribute to the creation of richer learning environments in stronger cases. In the stronger multifunctional cases, more room for manoeuvre was created by for instance switching from labour-intensive dairy cattle to more extensive beef production<sup>20</sup>.

The following fragment illustrates how a strongly multifunctional-oriented owner-manager involved in dairy farming re-organised his production-oriented activities.

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<sup>20</sup> The re-organisation of farm work by the strongly multifunctional owner-managers highlights their strong multifunctional orientation. Although the production-oriented activities are being re-organised and in some cases phased out, maintaining a certain degree of agricultural production is seen as a crucial part of multifunctional farming and as a way of distinguishing themselves, as farmers, from other rural entrepreneurs.



*“I increasingly simplified my farm work: I became less production-oriented for instance, instead of artificial insemination we keep our own bull, almost all jobs are outsourced to contractors. I stopped doing the easier farm jobs; I can’t make any money with it. We keep everything as simple as possible.”*

To close, the introduction of external labour and the creation of more room for manoeuvre by re-organising farm work fundamentally changes the socio-cultural as well as the technical and organisational characteristics of the work environment which used to be taken for granted. In stronger contexts, both processes clearly contribute to the development of richer learning environments which provide more opportunities for learning.

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## 4.5. Conclusions and discussion

Entrepreneurial learning has been described in many contexts and in many ways (Wang and Chugh, 2013). While initially often described from an individual and cognitive perspective (Cope, 2005), entrepreneurial learning has increasingly been considered in relation to its social and cultural context (Hamilton, 2011; Karataş-Özkan, 2011). Although these recent studies have contributed to a better understanding of entrepreneurial learning as an embedded and socially situated process, to date we know rather little about its close and two-sided relationship with the work environment (Lans et al., 2008). The present study shed light on this relationship by drawing on a comparative analysis between weak and strong multifunctional farms representing different socio-cultural, technical and organisational work environments (Wilson, 2008).

Our findings show first of all that the weak and strong multifunctional-oriented owner-managers shape entrepreneurial learning in different ways. Especially important is the position of multifunctionality in the studied cases. Due to the limited status of multifunctionality, weakly multifunctional owner-managers acted in a rather passive way, relying primarily on pre-existing, familiar and agricultural affordances in the work environment (e.g. relying on existing agricultural networks). In contrast, the strongly multifunctional-oriented owner-managers have developed stronger multifunctional identities and were found to act in a more pro-active manner, increasingly connecting with and operating in unfamiliar and non-agricultural networks. Their engagement in new networks

of external relationships as well as the organisational transformations taking place were found to be (re)shaping the work environment which in turn seemed to foster the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship.

What seems to be key here is what Billet (2011) described as *dual participation*. The author argued that whereas the work environment may provide many opportunities for learning (e.g. in the form of guidance and support), individuals themselves decide if and how they use the learning opportunities afforded to them. In a similar vein, Rae (2006) argued that entrepreneurs' selectivity with regard to the development and use of their social networks is an integral aspect of entrepreneurial learning. Next to people's selectivity and thus *agency* with regard to learning, their *identity* plays a role as well (Tynjälä, 2013). People's identities shape their agency towards participation and learning and vice versa (Billet, 2011). In the context of this study, the development of identity is a crucial aspect as becoming a multifunctional entrepreneur means assuming the identity of one (Burton and Wilson, 2006; Rae, 2006; Vesala and Vesala, 2010). So, if farmers lack a strong multifunctional orientation and identities, they are unlikely to have strong degrees of agency to participate and learn, this in turn preventing them from making any changes to their work environments which could have fostered their learning and stronger degrees of multifunctionality.

The main differences between the weak and strong multifunctional cases are summarised in table 10. The table provides a good impression of entrepreneurial learning and the relation with the work environment in weak and strong multifunctional contexts.

To conclude, this study demonstrated the complex and two-sided relationship between entrepreneurs, their work, learning and the work environment in the highly dynamic context of small entrepreneurial businesses. The owner-managers in the studied cases are all involved in entrepreneurial learning, yet the process is shaped in different ways. Their learning and entrepreneurial thought and actions (re)shape their work environments, in turn providing different opportunities for learning. The two-sided relationship between entrepreneurial learning and the work environment is therefore crucial to our understanding of entrepreneurial learning as an embedded and situated phenomenon. As entrepreneurial learning is learning in the context of building new businesses (Cope, 2005), it is not only embedded and affected by its social context but rather actively (re)shapes the work environment as a site of learning.

**Table 10:** The two-sided relationship between entrepreneurial learning and the work environment in weak and strong multifunctional cases summarised.

<b>Weak multifunctional</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Strong multifunctional</b>
<i>Production-oriented family farm with a side activity</i>		<i>Rural enterprise with multiple integrated businesses</i>
Lower More implicit	<b>Awareness of learning</b>	Higher More explicit
Learning takes place in classrooms	<b>Perception of learning</b>	Learning is a continuous process which takes place during daily practice
Lower Focussed on the job	<b>Perceived importance of learning</b>	Higher Focussed on farm development
During the start-up of new business activities		Constant need for new impulses
Unclear, less organised	<b>Position of learning</b>	Clear, more organised
Individuals	<b>Who is learning?</b>	Learning together
Mainly farm women		A learning community: the whole family, staff and others
Copy-pasting: imitating successful multifunctional farmers	<b>Learning activities</b>	Synthesising ideas into new applications
Specialised: focussed on production and agriculture	<b>Network used for learning</b>	Broader: beyond agriculture
Less	<b>Space taken/available for interaction and exploration</b>	More
Farm work is often highly labour-intensive		Farm work is being delegated increasingly which provides more room for manoeuvre
Lower	<b>Interaction opportunities provided by the work environment</b>	Higher
Smaller and more homogeneous community		Larger and more heterogeneous community
The family		New entrants

Table 10 is drawn from (Seuneke and Lans, 2011).

### Acknowledgements

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## Chapter 5

**Unveiling the role of farm women towards the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship on family farms: an entrepreneurial learning approach**



## 5. Unveiling the role of farm women towards the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship on family farms: an entrepreneurial learning approach

### Abstract

This chapter analyses women's role in the learning process that accompanies the switch towards multifunctionality and multifunctional entrepreneurship: the process by which farmers gain the necessary knowledge and skills 'to do multifunctionality', develop and adapt their identity as 'multifunctional entrepreneurs', and re-establish the identity of the farm as a multifunctional one. Detailed inspection of men's and women's positions and functions in the learning process reveals women's leading role in: 1) *introducing new identities and practices onto the farm*, 2) *providing access to new networks and learning environments*, and 3) *initiating negotiation within the farming family regarding the farm's (future) orientation towards primary production or multifunctionality*. All three aspects of learning are essential building blocks to the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship on family farms. The chapter is based on a study of 120 Dutch multifunctional farms, with a detailed analysis of the genderedness of the learning process on three of them.

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## 5.1. Introduction

Over the last decades, many European farmers have started new activities on their farm. In so doing, they have not only generated new sources of income, but have also established agriculture as an activity that offers multiple services to society which go beyond mass food production (Ploeg and Roep, 2003). The development of new business activities by these farmers can be seen as underlying a shift from the conventional production-oriented model of agriculture towards a new multifunctional paradigm (Wilson, 2008).

It has widely been agreed upon that such a switch towards multifunctionality requires the development of entrepreneurial skills among farmers (Alsos et al., 2011; Carter, 1998; Clark, 2009; Haugen and Vik, 2008; McElwee, 2008; Morgan et al., 2010; Vik and McElwee, 2011) as well as a re-orientation of their entrepreneurial identity (Burton and Wilson, 2006; Vesala and Vesala, 2010). So far, this learning process has been studied as an individual path and although there is considerable knowledge of which skills are required, we have little insight into how learning proceeds at the level of the farm and within the farming family. This is important as in Europe, farming is generally a family activity; certainly, multifunctional agriculture engages not only 'the farmer' but the whole farming family and often paid labour forces too (Bock, 2004; Jervell, 2011). This study approaches learning as a collective process in which the farming family – often primarily a couple – engages collaboratively. More particularly, it aims at a better understanding of the genderedness of this process and the different roles that women and men play in it.

As already mentioned above, it is important to take into account the fact that most farms in Europe are owned and managed by families (Gasson et al., 1988; Jervell, 2011). It is equally important to keep the specific dynamic of gender relations on family farms in mind. Numerous studies have pointed at the inequality in terms of ownership of capital, labour division and decision making power (Bock and Shortall, 2006; Brandth, 2002; Sachs, 1983; Shortall, 1999). Even today, most European farms are formally held by men and the management of production is also generally seen as a male domain (Shortall, 2006). This, however, seems to be changing, as it is generally women who take the lead in the process of switching towards multifunctionality (Bock, 2004). This is particularly the case with the *non-farming* business activities that are most prominent on multifunctional farms, such as agro-tourism, processing and direct sale and



integrated (child)care (Hassink et al., 2012; McGehee et al., 2007; Sharpley and Vass, 2006).

In the 1990s, many studies looked into the specific role of women in the development of multifunctionality, aiming to understand if and how it changed women's position and contributed to their empowerment. They argued that while modernisation pushed farm women into a peripheral position in farm management, women managed to regain a central position by integrating new business activities and rebuilding their own labour domain (Brandth, 2002). These studies shed light on the important role of women in the initiation and further development of new on-farm businesses as well as their crucial economic contribution to the survival of family farms (Bock and Shortall, 2006). Although several studies described how multifunctionality starts through the addition of new activities which are eventually expanded and interwoven with other farm activities (Wilson, 2008), we still know surprisingly little about the learning process that supports this change, and might be considered as the actual motor of change 'behind the scenes'. This study aims to contribute to filling this gap in the literature. More particularly, we explore the specific roles that farm women play in the learning process that supports the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship in family farms. A learning perspective greatly contributes to understanding the emergence and development of multifunctional entrepreneurship in this context. The following research question is guiding this study:

*What specific role do women play in the learning process underlying the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship in family farms?*

The remainder of this chapter is structured as follows. We will first elaborate on the theoretical basis of this study by discussing the literature on the genderedness of family farms and the theory of entrepreneurial learning which functions as the main framework. The following section elaborates on the empirical basis of the study and the three cases drawn upon. The chapter continues with the presentation of the main findings and closes by discussing the main conclusions.

## 5.2. Theoretical framework

### 5.2.1. Gendered role divisions in family farming

As farms are usually passed through the generations from father to son and therefore owned and managed by men, farming is broadly identified as a male business (Brandth, 2002; Saugeres, 2002; Whatmore, 1991). Women, in contrast, generally enter the farming business through marriage (Sachs, 1996). The division of roles is often gender-specific: most farm work is done by men whereas women do most of the work inside the house, besides domestic work and childcare, often including farm administration and some manual farm labour (Brandth and Haugen, 2010; Shortall, 2006). Due to their family backgrounds and prominent role in farm management, men generally derive their identities from farming (Saugeres, 2002; Villa, 1999). Women's identities have been found to be more connected to their role as farmers' wives (Brandth, 2002; Whatmore, 1991). More specifically, Whatmore (1991) argued that women's roles and identities are rooted in an agricultural gender ideology which prescribes their role and identity as 'wives' and 'mothers' instead of 'farmers'. This traditional gendered role division is strong, as it was found to be widely reproduced until recently (Brandth and Haugen, 2010; Morris and Evans, 2001).

The modernisation of agriculture which took place during the last century has supported the masculinisation of agriculture. The post-WWII modernisation process is particularly regarded as having pushed women out of farming. Whilst farm women had a large share in farming (e.g. in milking), the redistribution of farm work due to new agricultural technologies made farm women more 'housewives' than 'farmers' (Brandth, 2002). In some countries, farm women started working off-farm and found paid employment, for instance in nursing, teaching and administration (Kelly and Shortall, 2002). This, however, was rarely the case in The Netherlands until quite recently (Bock, 2004). Using a feminist approach, many researchers point to modernisation as the cause of gradual subordination of farm women through the closure of female labour domains, resulting in the de-skilling of female farm labour (Brandth, 2002; Rooij, 1994; Sachs, 1983; Shortall, 1999).

The rise of agricultural multifunctionality in the 1990s has changed this situation by providing farm women with the opportunity of integrating new economic activities into the family farm (O'Hara, 1994; Shortall, 2002; Symes, 1991) and developing a new professional identity as 'new rural entrepreneurs' (Bock,

2004; McGehee et al., 2007). In other words: whereas agricultural modernisations pushed women out, the development of multifunctionality has started to bring them back onto the family farm. Currently, it is widely acknowledged that with their new activities, farm women make a great contribution to the survival of family farms and the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship in agriculture (Bock, 2004; Brandth and Haugen, 2010; Sharpley and Vass, 2006). There are also some indications that this development affects men, who sometimes watch the increasing multifunctionality of their farm with concern, worrying about the loss of its agricultural identity (Ní Laoire, 2001; Peter et al., 2000; Villa, 1999). Most of the studies, however, enquire into how multifunctionality affects the position of women. Whilst many of them point out that multifunctionality fosters more equal gender relations in agriculture, there is work which underlines the obstinacy and continuity of gender inequality (Brandth, 2002). We do not yet know how to explain these different and seemingly contradictory findings. Possibly, the effect of multifunctionality differs across time and place; the type of multifunctional orientation and level of integration into the farm is also likely to make a difference (Wilson, 2007b, 2008). This chapter, however, is not primarily concerned with the changing position of women; it is mainly interested in which role they play in the learning process that accompanies the shift towards multifunctionality.

### 5.2.2. Entrepreneurial learning

The shift towards multifunctionality substantially changes farmers' role in agriculture and requires them to develop new identities, knowledge, skills and networks (Alsos and Carter, 2006; Burton and Wilson, 2006; McElwee et al., 2006). Key, in this transition, is the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship (Carter, 2001; Clark, 2009; Haugen and Vik, 2008; Vesala and Vesala, 2010). In the present study, the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship is approached through the lens of *entrepreneurial learning* (Cope, 2005; Dutta and Crossan, 2005; Hamilton, 2011; Minniti and Bygrave, 2001; Rae, 2006). We use the concept to unveil the specific role that farm women play in the daily, work-related and joint learning process through which farmers acquire the propensity, knowledge and skills required to start, develop and integrate new multifunctional business activities into their farms. In other words, it is the learning process which takes place during daily entrepreneurial performance and through which farmers and their families develop their multifunctional entrepreneurship.

In studies on entrepreneurial learning, two main approaches can be distinguished: an individual-cognitive and a socially-situated one (Sfard, 1998; Wang and Chugh, 2013). Whereas the first approach derives its theoretical foundations from Kolb's (1984) work on 'experiential learning', the latter is rooted in Lave and Wenger's (1991) notion of 'situated learning'. In contrast to Kolb, the anthropologists Lave and Wenger see learning as a social phenomenon rather than as a purely cognitive process. It is this socially situated perspective of entrepreneurial learning upon which this study draws.

Central in the present study is the framework of entrepreneurial learning developed by Rae (2006)<sup>21</sup>. Apart from encompassing the individual-cognitive and the socially-situated perspective on learning described above, Rae's framework suits our study as it also focus on the context of emerging entrepreneurship<sup>22</sup>. Rae (2006) defines entrepreneurial learning based on the following five understandings (p. 42):

- Entrepreneurial learning is a dynamic process of awareness, reflection, association and application that involves transforming experience and knowledge into functional learning outcomes (Cope and Watts, 2000).
- It comprises knowledge, behaviour and affective or emotional learning (Cope, 2005).
- It is affected by the context in which learning occurs and it includes the content of what is learned as well as the processes through which learning takes place (Politis, 2005).
- It is both individual, with personal differences in ability producing different learning outcomes, as well as social and organisational (Corbett, 2005).
- Finally, there are close connections between the processes of entrepreneurial learning and of opportunity recognition, exploitation, creativity and innovation (Lumpkin and Lichtenstein, 2005).

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<sup>21</sup> Rae's (2006) framework has also been used in chapter two of this thesis. This part of the framework is therefore rather similar to that of chapter two. Chapter two was published by the *Journal of Rural Studies* as Seuneke et al. (2013).

<sup>22</sup> Rae (2006) however draws on the context of emerging entrepreneurs in technology-based enterprises.

Rae's (2006) framework of entrepreneurial learning combines three themes<sup>23</sup>: 1) *personal and social emergence of entrepreneurial identity*, 2) *contextual learning* and 3) *the negotiated enterprise*. We will briefly summarise the three themes below.

The first theme, *personal and social emergence of an entrepreneurial identity*, refers to the understanding that the development of an entrepreneurial identity is fundamental to become an entrepreneur. Rae (2006) puts it as follows: "simply acquiring entrepreneurial skills and knowledge is not sufficient; the person who begins to act as an entrepreneur is assuming the identity of an entrepreneur" (p. 45). People develop their entrepreneurial identities through performing in the entrepreneurial role and by re-negotiating their self-conceptualisations in relation to others in their social environment.

The second theme, *contextual learning*, points to the importance of social participation and interaction for entrepreneurial learning. According to Rae (2006): "contextual learning includes social participation in community, industry and other networks through which individual experiences are related, compared and shared meaning is constructed. Through situated experience and social relationships people learn intuitively and may develop the ability to recognise opportunities" (p. 47). Contextual learning occurs *within* the boundaries of the organisation but as Rae (2006) underlines, interaction with the world *outside* the enterprise is crucial.

The third theme, *the negotiated enterprise*, refers to the ongoing negotiation and social learning process underlying entrepreneurial learning and the development of the enterprise. According to Rae (2006), "a vital aspect of the learning process of entrepreneurship is the ability to engage others constructively towards creating the venture. It is necessary for the entrepreneur to convey a shared belief in the new reality of the venture, and for this to become a means of realising personal dreams and aspirations through collective action" (p. 50). Although the negotiated enterprise covers both the negotiations and social learning taking place *within* and *outside* the enterprise, this study focusses on those taking place *within* the enterprise and among farm women and men or the couple more specifically.

Taken together, by developing new income-generating business activities on their farms, women play a crucial role with regard to the development

<sup>23</sup> The three themes are rooted in understandings from various scientific domains. For an elaborate overview of the theoretical basis, see Rae (2006) (p. 44).

of multifunctional entrepreneurship in agriculture (Bock, 2004; Brandth and Haugen, 2010; McGehee et al., 2007). Thus, whereas agricultural modernisation has gradually pushed women out of farming, multifunctionality seems to be opening up a gateway through which they may re-enter. We will demonstrate in this study that their re-integration is crucial for the birth of multifunctionality as women play a predominant role in the learning process that underlies the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship. In order to study women's engagement in this process we make use of Rae's (2006) conceptualisation of entrepreneurial learning as the core of our theoretical framework.

### 5.3. Empirical basis

This chapter draws on a research project that explored the 'dynamics and robustness' of multifunctional agriculture in The Netherlands. In the project, 120 multifunctional farmers who are involved in various combinations of production and multifunctional-oriented activities located throughout the country were revisited and interviewed. The interviews held were based on a structured questionnaire<sup>24</sup>. In a second empirical phase of the project, additional in-depth interviews were held among eighteen cases aiming to better understand the learning process underlying the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship<sup>25</sup>.

The fieldwork carried out on the 120 farms demonstrated that women generally initiated the start of new multifunctional activities. The eighteen in-depth interviews added to this by revealing that women also played a prominent role in the learning process that accompanied it, and through which farmers develop their multifunctional entrepreneurship. To increase our understanding of the underlying learning process and respective role of farm women and men, we decided to study three of the 18 farm cases in more detail and to reconstruct the proceedings of their collective process of learning. Table 11 presents an overview of the three cases studied.

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24 For more details about the research project 'Dynamics and Robustness of Multifunctional Agriculture', the structured interviews and the sample, see Oostindie et al. (2011b) and chapter one and three of this thesis.

25 For more details about the second empirical phase and the in-depth interviews held, see Seunke and Lans (2011) and chapter one, two and four of this thesis.

**Table 11:** Studied cases, couples, age, level of education, production and multifunctional-oriented activities (March 2011).

Case	Farm couple <sup>a</sup>	Age	Level of education	Production-oriented activities <sup>b</sup>	Multifunctional activities (since) <sup>b</sup>
A	Kate and Scott	40s	- Middle level applied (administration) - Lower level applied (agriculture/dairy)	- <b>Dairy farming (80 milking cows)</b>	- Landscape and nature management (1982) - <b>Bed and breakfast (2008)</b> (four en-suite rooms)
B	Jane and Patrick	40s	- Middle level applied (care/maternity) - Middle level applied (agriculture/pigs)	- <b>Pig farming (about 800 animals)</b> - Tree nursery (7 hectares)	- Farm excursions (2002) (stopping) - Production and selling of regional products (2004) - Farm education (2005) - <b>Care farming (day-care for the elderly) (2005)</b>
C	Rachel and Joe	40s	- Uni. of prof. edu. (facility management) - Middle level applied (agriculture/gardening)	- <b>Arable farming (about 50 hectares)</b> - Calf rearing (25 animals)	- <b>Campsite (25 pitches) (2003)</b>

Additional to case C: both Rachel and Joe have a part-time off-farm job (three days a week). Rachel works as a communications officer at the provincial landscape protection agency, Joe as an agricultural contractor.

<sup>a</sup> For privacy reasons, respondents' names have been changed.

In case A, both Kate and Scott were interviewed (in both empirical phases), in the other cases only the women; Jane (B) and Rachel (C).

<sup>b</sup> Main activities are in bold.

The three cases were selected as they demonstrate women's crucial role in the learning process which supports the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship. As we were interested in contexts of emerging multifunctional entrepreneurship, the new activities have been started relatively recently (about ten years ago). Furthermore, the farms represent different combinations of production and multifunctional-oriented activities and are located throughout the country. Case C was included for more specific reasons: in contrast to the others, Rachel succeeded her parents and both Rachel and Joe are involved in off-farm work. Rachel's off-farm job was found to have a particularly interesting role in her learning. In addition to table 11, the following paragraphs characterise the three farm cases in more detail.

**Case A:** *The bed and breakfast farm*

Kate and Scott run an average-sized dairy farm with a professional bed and breakfast in an attractive and touristic part of the country (see table 11). They are involved in nature and landscape management as well, but agro-tourism is considered as their main side-activity. Kate does not have a farming background; she grew up in town, was trained and worked as a secretary before she started the bed and breakfast. Scott on the other hand is firmly rooted in agriculture: he is a trained dairy farmer, succeeded his parents' farm and has worked on it since he left school. He collaborated closely with his father until his death some years ago. The main reason for setting up the bed and breakfast was Scott's wish to have more people around as he felt lonely during the day, without his father or Kate being around. Scott seems to be focussed on the dairy farming as he emphasises that their side-activity was not born out of financial need. Currently, there is a clear task division on the farm: whereas Scott focusses on the dairy farm, Kate is managing the agro-touristic activities and combines them with helping out Scott occasionally, doing the farm's administration, housekeeping and taking care of the family. When needed, their eldest teenage son assists his father as he is particularly keen on farming. Although the bed and breakfast was an immediate success and contributes greatly to the family income, agro-tourism is still considered a side-activity. They are also uncertain about how to prepare for the future of the farm; Scott fears that setting up the agro-touristic business will compromise his farming perspectives and – in time – those of their eldest son.

**Case B:** *The care farm*

Jane and Patrick run an average-sized pig farm combined with a tree nursery and a care facility focussing on day-care for elderly people (see table 11). Whilst care farming has become their main multifunctional activity, they are also involved in farm education and a network of farmers which produces and sells regional products jointly. Future development will focus on the development of their care activities as it fits their interest and is considered as having the best economic potential. The couple were driven to start their multifunctional activities mainly by economic motivations, as they needed additional income and wished to strengthen their economic resilience. Whereas Patrick took over the farm from his parents and focussed on pig farming, Jane grew up outside agriculture, was trained as a nurse and worked part-time in healthcare before she started on the farm. There is a clear role division in this case: whereas Jane



leads the care and other multifunctional activities, Patrick focusses on the pigs and growing trees. As well as managing the multifunctional activities, Jane occasionally helps Patrick out with farming and takes responsibility for the overall administration, the household and teenage children (with some help from her mother). The care farming business grew rapidly over the last years and currently contributes greatly to the family income. Due to the growth of the care farming activities and to secure quality standards, Jane recently employed two part-time care professionals on the farm. The couple face a challenging future: national cuts have decreased clients' healthcare budgets and the 2013 EU animal welfare regulations regarding pig housing will require great investments in their production-oriented activities.

#### **Case C: *The campsite farm***

Rachel and Joe own and manage an average-sized arable farm with a campsite in a touristic coastal area of the country (see table 11). They recently took over the farm from Rachel's parents who moved to a nearby village but are still helping out. Initially, Rachel's older brother was the intended successor but when he changed his mind, Rachel was keen on taking over instead. Rachel studied at a university of professional education (non-farming) and Joe was trained as a gardener. He has no farming (family) background. As Rachel's parents had sold the dairy cows, a new economic activity was needed in order to finance the succession of the farm. Rachel is passionate about farming, very motivated to continue the family business and contributing towards re-connecting society and agriculture. As well as their farm work, both have a part-time off-farm job (during the winter). Rachel works as a communications officer at the provincial landscape protection agency, Joe as an agricultural contractor. On the farm, a clear role division is present. Whereas Rachel is leading the agro-touristic activities, Joe focusses on the farming and maintenance of the campsite. Like the other women, Rachel takes care of the overall administration, household and family affairs. Their young children are going to a day-care centre a few days a week. Recently, the campsite was expanded and further professionalised, and currently contributes considerably to the family income. However, as their municipality regulates its (agro-)touristic market strictly, further growth is difficult. The couple will therefore focus on further professionalisation of the campsite.

## 5.4. Findings

In this section we explore the specific role the farm women play in the entrepreneurial learning process. The presentation of our findings is based on the three main themes of Rae's (2006) framework of entrepreneurial learning: 1) *personal and social emergence of entrepreneurial identity*, 2) *contextual learning* and 3) *the negotiated enterprise*. The findings are supported by verbatim and translated interview fragments.

### 5.4.1. Personal and social emergence of entrepreneurial identity

Rae (2006) states that the development of an entrepreneurial identity is a prerequisite to becoming an entrepreneur. In his words: "simply acquiring entrepreneurial skills and knowledge is not sufficient; the person who begins to act as an entrepreneur is assuming the identity of an entrepreneur" (p. 45).

The farmers who participated in this study have always considered themselves as entrepreneurs, but when they engaged in multifunctional activities, they eventually adapted and expanded their entrepreneurial identities; through the integration of agricultural and non-agricultural products and services their identity changes from a mono-functional/production-based identity to a multifunctional identity (see also paragraph 2.4.1.).

The re-developing of entrepreneurial identities was found to proceed in a gendered way, which is rooted in the gendered role division observed in all three cases<sup>26</sup>. Whereas the men focus on the primary production, the women initiate and lead the non-agricultural activities, combining these with farming jobs, overall farm administration, domestic work and taking care of the family. The gendered role division was articulated by the respondents through expressions such as: 'my' farm (m), 'your' tourist business (f), 'his' animals, 'her' clients and so on. Thus, due to the gendered role division, it is initially women who behave like and develop as multifunctional entrepreneurs.

In the interviews, Kate and Scott (case A) clearly pointed at the different identities they assume:

*Scott: "I still consider myself a farmer"*

*Kate: "And I consider myself more as an entrepreneur"*

*Scott: "Yes, she is taking a different path"*

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<sup>26</sup> Notably, although Rachel (case C) took over the family farm and married Joe, who is not a farmers' son, a traditional gender role division has been reproduced.

Jane (B) recognises a change in her identity as well. From being “the mother of so and so” she became a care farmer and a multifunctional entrepreneur:

*“It really enriches you as a human being [becoming a multifunctional entrepreneur]. When there is something going on in the village, you’re not just there as the mother of so and so. Well, you’re still a mother but you’re there as someone well known in the village as well. Like a local shopkeeper, they can’t go around without being noticed either. You really have a position in the community.”*

Apart from having more opportunities to re-develop their identities through their active engagement in multifunctionality, the women also experienced fewer problems in adapting their farm related identities. Being less rooted in agriculture they were more flexible and therefore able to realign their identities.

Women’s non-farming backgrounds are crucial in this respect. In contrast to their partners, Kate and Jane (case A and B) grew up, studied and worked outside agriculture before they married into it. Kate (A) said that she had always rejected the idea of becoming a farmer’s wife, even though she married a farmer. Although she had to get more involved in the farm when her father-in-law passed away, she managed to keep a certain distance to farming through her agro-touristic activities. Rachel (C) grew up in agriculture and always felt greatly connected to it, and to the family business. Nonetheless, she seems to be less embedded in agriculture than her husband. She refers particularly to her background in college and her non-farming, off-farm job as factors which foster a flexible identity, a broader perspective and thereby a stronger multifunctional orientation.

The gendered embeddedness in agriculture was clearly expressed during the interviews. Whereas the women displayed a strong multifunctional orientation, their husbands clinch more passionately to agriculture and see production as the primary priority:

*Scott (case A): “The dairy farm is powerful enough to generate sufficient income, when starting side activities becomes a need to maintain my farm, I will quit farming”.*

*Jane (case B): "I already knew I'm a people's person, I went for a people's profession. As for Patrick, it was a completely new experience. He likes being surrounded by people, but he'd never experienced that in his work before. That's just the case with farmers; they work alone on their farms."*

*Rachel (case C): "We're not involved in any agro-environmental schemes as Joe says that farmland is intended for agricultural production".*

To sum up, in the cases studied, it is not the men but the women who are re-developing their entrepreneurial identities and thereby developing as multifunctional entrepreneurs. The process proceeds more easily among women because of their active engagement in multifunctionality as well as their tendency to be less deeply rooted in agriculture and therefore less focussed on primary production.

#### **5.4.2. Contextual learning**

Rae (2006) argues that entrepreneurial learning is the result of a process of contextual learning. He describes it as follows: "contextual learning includes social participation in community, industry and other networks through which individual experiences are related, compared and shared meaning is constructed. Through situated experience and social relationships people learn intuitively and may develop the ability to recognise opportunities" (p. 47).

As farmers develop new *non-farming* businesses on their farms, it is essential for them to cross their vocational boundaries by connecting with external, *non-farming* networks<sup>27</sup>. Whereas men tend to stay behind on the farm, we see women leaving and participating in a wide range of networks within and outside agriculture once again. As a result, it is also women who become the external face and representative of the multifunctional farm.

In the following fragment, Jane (case B) illustrates the contextual learning activities she undertakes. Developing care farming activities, she particularly pointed at the importance of connecting with non-farming networks.

*"As I'm aiming towards care [farming] now, you really have to go out seeking new business partners. I have to go that way now. Yesterday for instance I went*

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<sup>27</sup> The gendered aspects of the 'boundary crossing process' have already been touched upon in chapter two of this thesis (see 2.4.2.). These findings formed an important motivation to examine the gendered aspects of entrepreneurial learning in further detail.

*to an Alzheimer's-café [a networking meeting for Alzheimer's professionals]. This is how you get into touch with the healthcare sector. You have to realise what things are out there now, don't you? Besides agriculture, you have to get into the healthcare sector now."*

Women are thus particularly equipped to cross the boundaries of the agricultural domain because they are the ones who 'do' the multifunctional activities on the farm, and go out to learn more. They also often have the advantage of knowing how to find the relevant contacts outside the farm because of their former job and engagement outside agriculture.

Due to their particular role, more neutral and flexible identities, non-farming family (A and B), education and professional backgrounds (A, B and C), these women's integration in the actual agricultural network and obligation towards their value-system is weaker and less committed. That makes it easier for them to cross over to new networks, which might even be closer to their earlier professional identity and, hence, more accessible than the agricultural network ever was to them. Jane (case B) for instance repeatedly pointed at her experiences in healthcare and how these enable her to cross the boundaries of agriculture.

In case C, Rachel plays a particularly important role with regard to the contextual learning process. Apart from connecting with and interacting in networks like the other women, she holds a part-time off-farm job as a communications officer during the winter. According to Rachel, her off-farm job forms an important source of knowledge, skills and inspiration for her on-farm business. In her own words:

*"My job contributes positively to my intellectual capacity and enables me to keep in touch with society [...] being away from the farm keeps me focussed."*

Thus, due to the gendered role division, contextual learning appears to be mainly a women's domain. Apart from their prominent role in the process, the women are particularly equipped to cross the boundaries of the agricultural domain as they are embedded in agriculture to a lesser degree. From this perspective, the women bridge and connect worlds and provide access to new networks and learning environments which are crucial in developing multifunctional entrepreneurship.

### 5.4.3. The negotiated enterprise

With the negotiated enterprise, Rae (2006) emphasises the negotiation and social learning process underlying entrepreneurial learning. The author puts it as follows: “a vital aspect of the learning process of entrepreneurship is the ability to engage others constructively towards creating the venture. It is necessary for the entrepreneur to convey a shared belief in the new reality of the venture, and for this to become a means of realising personal dreams and aspirations through collective action” (p. 50). In the context of this study, we focus on the negotiation and social learning process occurring among the farm women and men, and particularly on the role the women play in this respect.

The development of the new business activities by women was observed to initiate a negotiation process among the couples between production and multifunctional-oriented thought and action (Wilson, 2008). Whereas the men are led by productivist thinking, the women were found to be more multifunctionally oriented.

The negotiations are clearly visible in case A. Although Kate and Scott have embarked on the multifunctional pathway together by starting agro-touristic activities, they are still negotiating their personal ideas and aspirations with regard to the future development of the farm. Whereas Scott is still driven by production-oriented thinking, and struggles with legitimising their new strategy, Kate expressed more confidence about their strategy. During the interview, Scott repeatedly questioned their decision and expressed his fears that multifunctionality will compromise the farm and the next generation’s opportunities to make a living in agriculture:

*Scott: “An entrepreneur wants to achieve something: to progress in farming. I don’t want to deprive him [their son and successor] of the opportunity.”*

*Kate: “But does everyone have to start keeping three or four hundred cows?”*

*Scott: “Well, that’s a good question, who can tell? Nobody can.”*

*Kate: “They [the neighbouring dairy farmers, who recently heavily invested in their production capacity] are extremely vulnerable when the milk price crashes. You know, they are financed from head to toe, the whole farm, fully owned by the bank. So when the milk price changes, even in the slightest way...”*

Such negotiations fostered a re-orientation process among the men. They increasingly recognise that farming and ‘good entrepreneurship’ can go beyond production.

Case B illustrates how Jane's activities supported Patrick's re-orientation towards farming. In the following fragment, she reflects on the changing perspectives of her husband after initiating their first multifunctional activities:

*"We discovered that we really enjoyed having people around [on the farm]. I already knew, you see, I became a nurse for a reason [because she is a people's person], but for Patrick it was a huge eye-opener, he liked it a lot as well. What's more fun than telling people about your work? People enjoy it and that really boosts your ego. Enjoy our place! Being respected is nice, it gives you new energy. Especially in those bad times, to reload yourself, feed the animals, keep your place in order. People were very depressed in that period [Kate refers to the recent period in which many pig farmers were in trouble due to low yields]."*

To conclude, the development of new businesses by women initiates a negotiation process between production and multifunctional-oriented thought and action within the farming family. Quarrelling over and discussing the new identity of the farm is part and parcel of the learning process that both have to go through when initiating and consolidating a new multifunctional business, developing multifunctional identities as well as the necessary skills.

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## 5.5. Conclusions and discussion

Although it is widely acknowledged that the shift towards multifunctionality requires farmers to develop their entrepreneurial skills, little is known about the underlying collective learning process and change in skills and identities at the level of the farming family. This study aimed to learn more about this and to explore the genderedness of the learning process and the different roles women and men play within it.

For this purpose, Rae's (2006) conceptualisation of *entrepreneurial learning* was applied. In the following paragraphs, we will summarise the main findings with regard to each of the framework's major themes: 1) *personal and social emergence of entrepreneurial identity*, 2) *contextual learning* and 3) *the negotiated enterprise*.

With regard to the *social emergence of entrepreneurial identity*, we found that farming men and women *re-develop* their entrepreneurial identities. Through their experiences, they re-define entrepreneurship and re-develop their former

production-oriented identities to ones which fit their new multifunctional and entrepreneurial roles in agriculture.

The case studies indicate that, as women develop a multifunctional entrepreneurial identity by starting the new activities, they stimulate the men to change their agricultural entrepreneurial identities, and to integrate multifunctionality in their initially purely agricultural and production-oriented frame of reference. The farm women are less deeply rooted in agriculture due to their backgrounds and were therefore more ready to re-develop their entrepreneurial identities than were the men.

With regard to *contextual learning*, women also played a leading role when it came to crossing the boundaries of the farms, connecting with new networks in new contexts and learning from that. Whereas the men mainly focus on farming and stay at the farm, the women leave the farm to participate in and interact with a wide range of networks within and beyond agriculture. Women were particularly equipped to cross the boundaries of the agricultural domain as they could often fall back on their prior experiences outside agriculture through education and employment. The women were able then to bridge and connect worlds and provide access to new networks and learning environments which are essential to the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship.

Finally, with regard to *the negotiated enterprise*, the case studies demonstrated that the farm women initiate a negotiation process between production and multifunctionally-oriented thought and action. Discussions and disagreements about the future of the farm accompanied the start and further development of new activities, and stimulated especially the men to look beyond the boundaries of the familiar world of agriculture and reconsider their own professional identity as well as the identity of the farm.

To conclude, Rae's (2006) framework of entrepreneurial learning provides a good lens to understand what makes farm women play a leading role in this context. By initiating and developing new on-farm business activities, they 1) introduce new identities and practices onto the farm, 2) provide access to new networks and learning environments, and 3) initiate a negotiation process between production and multifunctionally-oriented thought and action within the family. These gendered aspects of entrepreneurial learning are essential building blocks to the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship by family farmers.



Women's specific position in the family farm is important in gaining an understanding of their crucial role from a learning perspective. Whereas their husbands' backgrounds and prominent roles in farm management have tied them to agriculture, the women have more 'room for manoeuvre'. They are more flexible and capable of 'opening-up' and crossing the boundaries of agriculture. In some cases, the question could even be raised as to whether they needed to open-up and cross the boundaries at all, as some of them have never been as deeply rooted in agriculture as the men are. In other words: whilst women's peripheral position in agriculture is generally interpreted as exclusion and subordination (Brandth, 2002; Sachs, 1996; Shortall, 2006), it could well be considered an advantage and strength in the context of this study.

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# Chapter 6

## Conclusions and discussion



## 6. Conclusions and discussion

### 6.1. Introduction

This thesis focussed on the many Dutch farmers who have started and integrated new (non-farming) activities into their farms (Eurostat, 2013), thereby generated new sources of income and established agriculture as an activity that goes beyond mass food production (Ploeg and Roep, 2003). The development of new business activities by these farmers represents a shift from the conventional production-oriented model of agriculture, originating from the post-WWII agricultural modernisation process, towards a paradigm of multifunctional agriculture (Renting et al., 2009; Wilson, 2008). This transition encourages farmers to re-orient, moving beyond the practices they take for granted and developing their entrepreneurial competence (Morgan et al., 2010; Vesala and Vesala, 2010).

To contribute to the fields studying the development of entrepreneurship (Alsos et al., 2011) and multifunctionality in agriculture (Wilson, 2008), this thesis explored the entrepreneurial learning process which was seen as underlying the development of multifunctional farmers' entrepreneurship as well as forming the actual driver of farm-level multifunctionality behind the scenes. The following research objective was formulated:

- *Unveiling and improving the understanding of the learning process underlying the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship as well as driving farm-level multifunctional transitional pathways.*

The objective was broken down into four different research questions, each of them focussing on a specific aspect of entrepreneurial learning in multifunctional agriculture (see 1.3.).

In the following paragraph, the four research questions central in this thesis will be briefly answered. The chapter continues by articulating the main theoretical contribution of this thesis and is closed with methodological reflections, avenues for further research and finally by drawing out recommendations for the support and education of future and current multifunctional farmers.

## 6.2. Main findings answering the research questions

1. Which major factors underlie entrepreneurial learning in the context of emerging farm-level multifunctionality?

Guided by Rae's (2006) framework, chapter two brought the entrepreneurial learning process to light and revealed three major factors driving the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship in the studied cases. The three factors include: 1) *re-developing an entrepreneurial identity*; 2) *crossing the boundaries of agriculture* and 3) *opening up the family farm*.

The first factor refers to the importance of assuming the identity of an entrepreneur to become one (Rae, 2006). In the context of this thesis, farmers need to re-define entrepreneurship and develop identities more compatible with their new multifunctional role in agriculture. This, however, was found to be far from self-evident. In some cases, perceived social norms regarding production-oriented farming discouraged farmers from legitimising their new role and thus re-developing their identities.

The second factor refers to the 'situated' nature of entrepreneurial learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991). The farmers in the study do not develop their entrepreneurship in solitude but rather through interaction and social participation. Their partners, children, other family members, friends, as well as colleagues, customers and suppliers are all important in fostering their learning. The essence of this 'contextual learning process' (Rae, 2006) in the context of this thesis is, however, the fact that farmers develop *non-farming* activities and thus need to cross the boundaries of the agricultural domain increasingly for the purposes of participation and learning. Operating across the boundaries of the agricultural domain however did not prove to be self-evident. The less experienced farmers in particular often felt uncomfortable and incapable of connecting with and operating in non-farming environments.

The third factor finally refers to the negotiated relationships entrepreneurs have and the learning which is fostered by these (Rae, 2006). In the context of this study, the shift towards multifunctionality was found to bring about profound changes in farmers' roles and work environments. In this changing context, the farmers learned that instead of doing everything themselves they increasingly need to involve others to realise their goals and ambitions. 'Opening

up' the family farm through the introduction of externals was furthermore found to infuse the organisation with new ideas, viewpoints and critical capacity which in turn created richer learning environments.

Crucial to understanding these factors is the process of transition from production-oriented to multifunctional farming (Wilson, 2008). After decades of post-war production-oriented agricultural modernisation, the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship seems to be far from self-evident. Apart from the technical and organisational challenges faced, the studied farmers themselves need to break loose from the productivist regime and its associated logic. In line with Burton and Wilson (2006), it seems that farmers' thought and action are however still firmly rooted in the productivist model of agriculture, despite their engagement in multifunctionality. These 'productivist path dependencies' (Wilson, 2008) play a prominent role throughout this thesis.

2. What is the relationship between the specific form of multifunctional orientation and the nature of the social capital used for entrepreneurial learning?

In the general exploration of entrepreneurial learning in different multifunctional farm cases, chapter one suggested a relationship between farmers' specific multifunctional orientation and the types of social capital used for entrepreneurial learning. This relationship was further studied in chapter three.

By studying the 120 multifunctional farmers, chapter three demonstrated that farmers with different multifunctional orientations shape entrepreneurial learning differently. More specifically, those with a relatively strong multifunctional orientation were found to interact more actively with others for learning. They moreover increasingly interact beyond the boundaries of their direct social and cultural environments. Whereas farmers with a weak or moderate multifunctional orientation stay among peers within agriculture, thus predominantly drawing on *bonding* social capital, their counterparts with a stronger multifunctional orientation seem to increasingly broaden their horizons by drawing more on *bridging* forms of social capital. These farmers can therefore potentially access new learning contexts going beyond the agricultural domain, thereby exposing themselves to new and different ideas which in turn foster their entrepreneurial learning.

In accordance with the findings of chapter two, the findings of chapter three confirm that the legacy of post-war agricultural modernisation plays a role in this respect. The productivist path dependencies (Wilson, 2008) challenge emerging multifunctional farmers to assume new identities, develop their multifunctional activities and therefore cross their socio-cultural and vocational boundaries by exploring and connecting with networks beyond agriculture. Chapters three and five show that more strongly multifunctional-oriented farmers and farm women particularly tend on average, however, to be freer of the old model. Whereas more strongly multifunctional-oriented (male) farmers have managed to assume new identities, break free from productivist norms and take risks towards developing multifunctionality, women seem to be less deeply rooted in agriculture in the first place.

3. What is the relationship between farmers' entrepreneurial learning and the development of the work environment as a learning context?

By comparing cases characterised by weak and strong degrees of farm-level multifunctionality (Wilson, 2008) as representing contrasting socio-cultural, technical and organisational contexts, chapter four revealed a complex and two-sided relationship between farmers' entrepreneurial learning and the work environment.

The chapter demonstrates that whereas the studied farmers are all involved in entrepreneurial learning, they shape the process in different ways. Their learning consequently supports the creation of different work/learn environments which in turn foster learning differently (see paragraph 4.5., table 10).

Although researched in a different way and using a different perspective, these findings are supportive to those reported in chapter three. Similarly, chapter four demonstrated that strongly multifunctional-oriented farmers were increasingly engaged in new networks of external relationships outside the agricultural domain. In combination with the organisational transformations initiated (e.g. by hiring external staff), farmers (re)shape their work environments, which in turn seems to stimulate the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship in strong cases.

Seen as key here are the concepts of *identity* and *agency* (Billet, 2001). People's identities shape their agency towards participation and learning and



vice versa. So, if farmers lack a strong multifunctional orientation and identity, they are unlikely to have strong degrees of agency to participate and learn. This prevents them from reshaping their work environments which would in turn have fostered learning and the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship.

This *two-sided relationship* between entrepreneurial learning and the work environment is therefore crucial to our understanding of entrepreneurial learning as an embedded and situated phenomenon. Entrepreneurial learning is not only embedded and affected by its social context but rather actively (re) shapes the work environment as a site of learning.

4. What specific role do women play in the learning process underlying the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship in family farms?

Although to different degrees, all chapters of this thesis point at the crucial role played by women in the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship. As the women generally take the lead in the process of switching towards multifunctionality, the underlying entrepreneurial learning process has become a women's affair as well. Like chapter two, chapter five uses Rae's (2006) triadic framework of entrepreneurial learning but this time from a gender perspective. Applying the framework in three cases unveiled women's crucial role in the learning process.

The exploration of women's and men's positions and functions in the learning process revealed that women: 1) *introduce new identities and practices onto the farm*, 2) *provide access to new networks and learning environments*, and 3) *initiate negotiation within the farming family regarding the farm's (future) orientation towards primary production or multifunctionality*.

With regard to the first element of women's role, the new multifunctional dynamics and identities brought into the farm by the women's activities stimulate men to change their agricultural identities and to integrate multifunctionality into their mainly agricultural and production-oriented frames of reference. Due to their family and professional backgrounds, the women were moreover found to be less deeply rooted in agriculture and therefore more ready to re-develop their identities than their husbands were.

Second, as already partly identified in chapter two, the women were found to play a leading role in the process of 'crossing boundaries' by leaving the farms, connecting to new networks in new contexts and learning from that.

Whereas the men often stay at the farm, the women leave it to participate in new networks going beyond agriculture. From this perspective, women bridge and connect worlds and provide access to networks and learning environments which are essential to the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship.

Third, the women were found to initiate a process of negotiation in the family farm between production-oriented and multifunctional thought and action. The negotiations were found to stimulate particularly the men to re-orient, moving away from the practices they had taken for granted and causing them to reconsider their own professional identity as well as the identity of the farm. Together, all three aspects of learning are essential building blocks in the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship on these family farms.

An important aspect in understanding women's crucial role in the entrepreneurial learning process is their specific position in the family farm. Whereas their husbands' backgrounds and prominent roles in farm management have tied them to (production-oriented) agriculture, the women are freer in their thought and action and therefore more flexible and capable of 'opening up' to multifunctionality as well as crossing the boundaries of the agricultural domain. From this perspective, the peripheral position often attributed to women in family farming (Brandth, 2002) is more of a strength than a weakness.

### **6.3. Theoretical contribution of this thesis**

This section articulates how the four studies summarised above contribute to the two research problems identified in the introduction (see 1.2.): the need to unveil the learning process which 1) underlies the development of entrepreneurship and 2) drives farm-level multifunctional transitional pathways. The structure of this discussion is based on these two problems. The first section characterises the learning process, while the second continues by reflecting on how this learning process is shaping individual farm-level transitional pathways towards multifunctionality.

#### **6.3.1. Unveiling the learning process**

Whereas until recently work on (multifunctional) entrepreneurship in agriculture has been predominantly focussing on farmers' skills – the 'what question' – this thesis contributes to theory by elaborating on the 'how question'. It unveils how

the studied farmers develop their multifunctional entrepreneurship and how this learning process can be characterised.

Hitherto, literature on entrepreneurship in (multifunctional) agriculture has placed a strong emphasis on entrepreneurial farmers as *individuals* developing their (multifunctional) identities and entrepreneurial skills (Burton and Wilson, 2006; McElwee et al., 2006; Morgan et al., 2010; Phelan and Sharpley, 2011). By focussing on the context of the farm and on the family or couple managing it, this thesis demonstrates that ‘*the emerging entrepreneurial farmer*’ does not exist. Essential in this argument is the fact that farms are predominantly managed and/or owned by families (Gasson et al., 1988; Jervell, 2011). Although this thesis found that farm women play a key role, the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship is developed and expressed jointly by the couple or the family, and often in partnership with others involved in the family business. Rae (2006) describes this notion as a process of ‘joint enterprise’ meaning that entrepreneurs cannot realise their ambitions by themselves but rather have to work together (p. 50). This is especially the case for farms labelled as strongly multifunctional, as these are often characterised by more shared (gender) role divisions and moreover, apart from family labour, often involve externals.

This thesis contributes furthermore by presenting the learning process as a specific type of *work-related learning* (Rae, 2006; Tynjälä, 2013). Although farmers’ learning can involve more formal and deliberate practices (such as participating in a farmers’ learning network, attending a course), the bulk is taking place informally, accidentally and as a side-effect of daily work (Marsick and Watkins, 1990). As the learning is highly embedded in daily practice and farmers are primarily focussing on doing their job, learning is moreover often occurring without them being aware of it (Eraut, 2004). In the European research project Entrepreneurial Skills of Farmers (ESoF)<sup>28</sup>, Vesala and Pyysiäinen (2008) already referred to the work-related character of learning by arguing that farmers develop their entrepreneurial skills predominantly through a process of ‘learning-by-doing’, and less so through formal education. This type of work-related learning is relevant in multifunctional farming as it occurs particularly in cases of changing roles, tasks and contexts (Akkerman and Bakker, 2011; Marsick and Watkins, 1990).

By presenting learning as a work-related process, this thesis moreover unveils its *socially situated nature* (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). This means that farmers do not develop their entrepreneurship only

<sup>28</sup> See [www.esofarmers.org](http://www.esofarmers.org)

individually and cognitively, but rather predominantly through participation in and interaction with their social context. Through social participation with a myriad of actors, within and outside the farm, farmers – men, women and their families – develop the propensity, knowledge and skills to develop multifunctional entrepreneurship. This thesis demonstrates furthermore that the work environment – encompassing the entire socio-cultural arena in which they operate, both within and beyond the farm – potentially provides a rich learning context. ‘Support and guidance’ afforded by the family within the farm as well as by externals such as fellow multifunctional farmers, clients, advisers and rural entrepreneurs, is an important factor fostering the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship. Alternatively however, the work environment can also hamper learning as the pedagogical potential of work environments often differ greatly. The ‘quality’ of support and guidance is for instance difficult to judge and social norms, such as towards production-oriented farming, can discourage farmers from reorienting and developing multifunctionality. Crucial in order to understand farmers’ learning as a work-related and socially situated phenomenon is moreover the *two-sided relationship* expounded upon in this thesis (chapter four). Farmers’ learning is not only embedded in and affected by its social context, but also actively (re)shapes the work environment as a site of learning. Thus, farmers and other small business entrepreneurs can improve the quality of their learning environments themselves to a larger degree than for instance professionals in large organisations.

The learning process unveiled in this thesis concurs with that of general farmers described by for example Kilpatrick and Johns (2003), who found that although farmers learn in a variety of ways and by using different sources, “they tend to prefer learning through interaction, delivered in a way that suits the time constraints of running a small business with content that is directly relevant to their situation” (p. 162). In addition, Gielen et al. (2003a) emphasised the role of social networks with regard learning and argued that, to stay innovative, farmers particularly need to look for impulses from weak and unknown networks. Interesting is that these traits of learning are quite similar to those of general small business entrepreneurs (Hamilton, 2011; Rae, 2006). Key in the context of this thesis is however the fact that the multifunctional farmers develop *non-farming* business activities and increasingly need to ‘cross the boundaries of the agricultural domain’ by connecting with and participating in new and, above all, *non-farming* networks and communities of practice in order to learn. Although all

learning involves processes of *boundary crossing* (Akkerman and Bakker, 2011), the interaction and participation across the boundaries of the farm and (production-oriented) agriculture seems to be particularly important for understanding the learning process studied in this thesis.

In short, until recently, work on entrepreneurship in (multifunctional) agriculture had a strong focus on individual farmers' entrepreneurial skills. Although understanding these skills is important, this thesis takes a further step by uncovering the underlying learning process. It also provides a different perspective to learning. Instead of using an individual and cognitive perspective, it presents learning as a joint affair, something embedded in daily practice and strongly affected by its social context (and vice versa).

### 6.3.2. Learning as the engine of farm-level multifunctional transitional pathways

As well as underlying the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship, the entrepreneurial learning process brought to light in this thesis is seen as the actual motor driving the shift towards farm-level multifunctionality. By unveiling the learning, this thesis greatly contributes to a better understanding of the internal and more intangible drivers of farm-level multifunctional transitional pathways (Wilson, 2008).

This thesis demonstrates that the joint, work-related and socially situated learning process fosters multifunctional thought and action among emerging multifunctional farmers. Through social interaction in and participation with new social networks and contexts, farmers re-orient and move away from their former roles, learning the skills needed in order to become multifunctional entrepreneurs and acquire the tools to push their farm towards multifunctionality.

Crucial in order to understand how farmers' learning process is shaping the development of farm-level multifunctionality pathways are the three key processes of entrepreneurial learning identified in this thesis through Rae's (2006) framework of entrepreneurial learning (see chapters two and five). To be able to become multifunctional, emerging multifunctional farmers need to: 1) *re-develop their entrepreneurial identities*, 2) *cross the boundaries of agriculture* and 3) *open up the family farm*.

The re-development of entrepreneurial identities is fundamental to the transition towards multifunctionality. This thesis showed that through daily practice, experimentation, participation and interaction in new and

non-farming contexts, farmers acquire the self-confidence, skills and beliefs in multifunctionality essential to break free from the productivist norms and routines. Although the re-development of identities is far from self-evident, due to persistent production-oriented 'baggage' and 'system memory' (Wilson, 2008), it is crucial. If farmers are unable or unwilling to re-orient towards a new role in agriculture and assume new identities, it is unlikely that they will have much agency towards developing new business activities or ultimately establish strong degrees of farm-level multifunctionality.

A second key aspect of entrepreneurial learning which was found to drive the development of farm-level multifunctionality is 'crossing the boundaries of agriculture'. Throughout this thesis it was demonstrated that strongly multifunctional-oriented farmers – who managed to re-develop their professional identities – were increasingly able to broaden their horizons and cross the boundaries of the farm and the agricultural domain. Crossing the boundaries of agriculture is essential. As multifunctional farming encompasses the development of activities going beyond agriculture, farmers need to connect to new and non-farming networks in order to learn and to establish their businesses. Farmers who cross the boundaries of agriculture gain access for themselves to new and essential learning environments and expose themselves to new and different ideas, in turn fostering the development of multifunctional identities and multifunctional entrepreneurship. Assuming new identities is fundamental here again, farmers unwilling or unable to re-develop their identities will not easily cross the boundaries of agriculture.

The third aspect of entrepreneurial learning driving the development of entrepreneurship and multifunctionality is the process described in this thesis as 'opening up the family farm'. It was found that the relatively strongly multifunctional-oriented farmers – those who managed to assume new identities – increasingly 'open up' the family farm by introducing externals such as paid professionals, volunteers and apprentices. The introduction of externals was found to create more space to interact, learn and moreover infuse the family farm with new ideas, viewpoints and knowledge. These organisational changes potentially create richer learning environments which in turn foster the development of stronger degrees of farm-level multifunctionality. Identity is essential here as well. If farmers are unable to legitimise their new activities, it is unlikely that they will create any more 'room for manoeuvre' by for instance hiring staff and/or reorganising the primary production.

By focussing on ‘the family’ and more specifically on women’s and men’s roles, this thesis moreover demonstrates that within the family farm, women are key actors in the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship and thus the shift towards multifunctionality (see chapter five). The women were found to 1) *introduce new identities and practices onto the farm*, 2) *provide access to new networks and learning environments*, and 3) *initiate negotiation within the farming family regarding the farm’s (future) orientation towards primary production or multifunctionality* (see chapter five). Together, these three processes stimulate the development of stronger degrees of multifunctional thought and action and push the farm towards multifunctionality.

Central in understanding women as key actors is their specific role and position in the family farm. Whereas the men’s background and prominent position in farm management has tied them to (production-oriented) agriculture, the women appear to have more ‘room for manoeuvre’. They are more flexible and capable of ‘opening up’ to new agricultural models, re-developing their identities and crossing the boundaries of the agricultural domain. This makes the women less ‘path dependent’ than the men (Wilson, 2008) and thus key actors with regard to the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship on family farms. In some cases it could even be argued that farm women did not need to re-develop their identities, open up or cross the boundaries of the agricultural domain; due to their frequent non-farming backgrounds, training and off-farm activities, the women seemed never to have been as deeply rooted in (production-oriented) agriculture as the men are. Indeed, Wilson (2008) refers to *new entrants* and actors who have been exposed to new knowledge environments – such as women – as often being more open-minded about multifunctionality and therefore more likely to have ambitions towards multifunctionality.

In time, the learning process unveiled in this thesis seems to cause frictions between the development of farmers’ multifunctional entrepreneurship and production-oriented action and thought. Due to their entrepreneurial development, farmers were found to increasingly perceive the production-oriented basis of their farm as a limitation to their multifunctional ambitions. As a consequence, they tend to reorganise and sometimes even extensify their production-oriented activities in order to create more room for manoeuvre. These tensions between production-oriented and multifunctional thought and action seem to be central to the development of farm-level multifunctionality and echo the ‘constant tussle’ between production-oriented and multifunctional

thought and action as identified by Wilson (2008). The combination of primary production and multifunctionality seems to play a continuous role. In cases of strong degrees of farm-level multifunctionality new and this time ‘*multifunctional* path dependencies’ were for instance found to cause problems. Although, multifunctionality was generally seen as enlarging farmers’ successional perspectives, elaborate rural enterprises consisting of a large number of very personal and inseparable business activities were often seen as difficult to pass on to the next generation.

To close, by unravelling the learning process, this thesis contributes to better understand the internal and intangible drivers of farm-level multifunctionality (Wilson, 2008). The three factors which were identified moreover embody concrete starting points to foster the learning process underlying these farm-level multifunctional transitional pathways.

## 6.4. Methodological reflections

### 6.4.1. Generalisability

With regard to the interpretation, it needs to be acknowledged that the findings of this thesis are based on empirical work carried out among a relatively small selection of specific farm cases located in specific parts of The Netherlands. Although the findings of this thesis cannot be and are not intended to be generalised, it is believed that they do not only apply to the specific multifunctional farms studied.

Despite their contextual specificities, the core elements of the entrepreneurial learning process brought to light in this thesis seem initially to be rather generic. Regardless of its specific context, the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship involves similar processes including the development of new identities and processes of social participation and negotiation. The ability to apply Rae’s (2006) triadic framework of entrepreneurial learning in the context of this study already proves its generic character. The framework was developed in the context of emerging technology-based entrepreneurs but proved to be applicable in multifunctional farming as well (see chapters two and five).

Further to the learning process itself, the multifunctional context of this thesis was not unique either. In Europe, farming is predominantly a family



business (Gasson and Winter, 1992; Jervell, 2011), and the important role of women in the development of multifunctionality has been reported widely (Bock, 2004; Brandth, 2002) as well as the transitional path-dependencies connected to the post-war, production-oriented process of modernisation (Alsos and Carter, 2006; Burton and Wilson, 2006; Wilson, 2007a, 2008). Together with the general traits of the learning process, these contextual characteristics make the findings of this thesis relevant on a much broader scale.

#### **6.4.2. Unveiling work-related types of learning**

The learning process underlying the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship brought to light in this thesis must be understood as a work-related and situated phenomenon. This means that farmers' learning is embedded in daily practices and can only be understood in relation to its socio-cultural, technical and organisational context. Due to its work-related and situated nature, researching this type of learning is however a very demanding and difficult endeavour.

Problematic in researching work-related types of learning, according to Eraut (2004), is the fact that most respondents see learning not as something related to their work but rather occurring in formal educational settings. Working and learning are thus often seen as separate activities. In addition, as work-related learning is largely invisible, embedded in daily activity and therefore taken for granted by respondents, it is not recognised as such. The hidden and tacit nature of work-related learning moreover often troubles respondents in reflecting on and describing it.

These challenges were taken into account in the design of the third research phase of the 'dynamics and robustness' project on which this thesis draws (see 1.4.3.). Due to the above reasons, qualitative in-depth interviews were found most suitable in gaining insight into the embedded and hidden learning process. Eraut (2004) was also followed when carrying out the actual interviews. The interviews were for instance started by inviting the farmers to reflect on their work and their work environments in relation to the transition towards multifunctionality. From here, it was often a small step to discuss the associated learning process: how it affected farmers' identities, with whom they interacted for learning and how they dealt with their changing work environments. Finally, the learning process was very well contextualised through the in-depth interviews and because the respondents had been visited and interviewed before in the

earlier empirical phase of the 'dynamics and robustness' project (see chapter one).

Nevertheless, discussing learning with the respondents was still found to be quite difficult. In line with Eraut (2004), the farmers did not generally recognise learning as such, and often struggled with describing their learning.

## 6.5. Avenues and recommendations for further research

As research always generates new questions, some concrete avenues and recommendations for further research are formulated below:

- Until recently, much attention has been paid to 'the what question' regarding the development of entrepreneurship in agriculture: what skills are needed? Although 'the what' is very important, future research should increasingly focus on the 'how question': how do farmers develop their (multifunctional) entrepreneurship?
- As mentioned in the methodological reflections, this thesis is based on a relatively small selection of specific multifunctional farm cases located in specific parts of The Netherlands. Further research is therefore needed to test the findings of this thesis and to examine the learning process in further detail in different farms, regions and European countries.
- Future research should take the challenges connected to the unveiling of work-related types of learning described above into account. Respondents see working and learning often as separate processes and due to the hidden and tacit nature of work-related learning, often find it difficult to reflect on and talk about it (Eraut, 2004).
- The development of farm-level multifunctionality is a highly dynamic phenomenon (Wilson, 2008). Additional longitudinal work is therefore needed to generate a better understanding of how the learning process proceeds and shapes farm-level multifunctionality over longer periods of time.

- This thesis unveiled learning as a shared, work-related and situated phenomenon. To understand the development of (multifunctional) entrepreneurship, future research should therefore not focus solely on ‘the entrepreneurial farmer’ but include the family members and women in particular, in combination with the wider social-cultural, technical and organisational context.
- This thesis demonstrates that men’s and women’s specific roles and functions are crucial to gain an understanding of the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship on family farms. Men’s and women’s roles in the process therefore provide an important subject for further research. As the role of women seemed to be most prominent in early stages of multifunctional development, it would be very interesting to study how it proceeds in time. Will they carry on as important actors or will the men eventually take over again?
- Due to the ongoing reforms of European agricultural policy, entrepreneurship is increasingly important. More work on entrepreneurship in agriculture is therefore required. Like other recent studies, this thesis successfully integrates frameworks and concepts from agriculture and small business entrepreneurship literature. In line with Alsos et al. (2011) it needs to be stressed that the field of small business entrepreneurship research provides many stepping stones which are helpful in our future work on agricultural entrepreneurship.

## 6.6. Recommendations for developing multifunctional entrepreneurship in agriculture

Next to theory, this thesis contributes to practice. The following sections articulate some practical recommendations on how to foster future and current farmers’ multifunctional entrepreneurship. First, however, some words about the agricultural education and support system as a whole.

Although acknowledging the rise and value of multifunctional farming, Europe’s agricultural education and support system is still firmly rooted in the production-oriented model of agriculture (Wilson, 2008). This is certainly the

case in The Netherlands. The experiences with the ‘dynamics and robustness’ project made clear that multifunctionality is not seen by everyone in the system as a serious alternative farming strategy and therefore lacks a clear position in its curricula and programmes. As multifunctional farming has developed into a meaningful entrepreneurial strategy over the years, it should however gain a place in the agricultural education and support system. Like the farmers studied in this thesis, the agricultural education and support system therefore needs to ‘open up’ in order to let multifunctional entrepreneurship in and ‘cross its (sub)sectoral boundaries’. Although much effort has until recently been made to position multifunctional entrepreneurship in The Netherlands (Fischer et al., 2012), there is still much work to do before multifunctional entrepreneurship has acquired a place in the agricultural education and support system.

In the following section, some more concrete recommendations for the education and support of future and current multifunctional farmers are formulated.

- Despite the importance of entrepreneurial skills (Wolf and Schoorlemmer, 2007), this thesis demonstrated that the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship takes far more than teaching (individual) farmers entrepreneurial skills. Apart from developing skills, teachers and trainers should focus on the re-development of farmers’ roles, identities and boundary crossing processes as well as supporting farmers to find their ways through a changing work environment, going beyond agriculture (chapter two).
- This thesis has shown that the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship suffers from strong production-oriented norms. Due to these norms, some farmers were found to struggle in legitimising their new practices. Although it is extremely difficult to support current farmers in fighting these norms, it is possible to at least raise current and especially future farmers’ awareness that ‘good entrepreneurship’ goes well beyond productivist thought and action. Multifunctional farm visits, guest lectures, and internships are starting points, but of course much more is required in order to overcome the legacy of decades of production-oriented thought and action (Burton and Wilson, 2006; Wilson, 2008).

- Relevant with regard to both initial and post-initial education is the importance of ‘crossing the boundaries of agriculture’ demonstrated in this thesis. As multifunctional farming involves the development of new and *non-farming* activities, farmers need to increasingly operate beyond the farm yard and across their vocational boundaries. Present and future farmers should therefore be familiarised with the world outside agriculture, preferably at an early stage. With regard to educating future generations, the non-farming internships recently introduced by some agricultural schools in The Netherlands are a suitable way to stimulate the boundary crossing process and it might even be considered whether they should be made compulsory for all young farmers.
- All chapters of this thesis point towards the importance of farmers’ ability to manage their own learning. Farmers’ awareness of learning, and their ability to manage it and shape their learning environments should therefore become an import aspect of educating and supporting future and current farmers.
- This thesis demonstrated the situated nature of multifunctional entrepreneurship and the interaction between learning and the work environment as learning context (all chapters). As Dutch education and support has a strong focus on ‘the farmer’ as ‘the entrepreneur’, it needs to adopt this more situated perspective by increasingly approaching farmers and their learning process in connection to their social, cultural, technical and organisational contexts. With regard to educational practice, future and present farmers should be taught that entrepreneurship and learning is not an individual but rather a joint affair involving – and highly affected by – their social environment (e.g. partners, parents, networks of external relationships). Farmers could be supported by for instance analysing their social environment and understanding how they can use and shape their social context as learning environments. More particularly, as multifunctional farming and the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship seemed to be strongly gendered (chapter five), women’s and men’s roles in the family farm should be taken into account more specifically as well. This could be done for instance by developing courses/ support programmes tailored for women and men.

- In The Netherlands, the support of current multifunctional farmers is strongly organised and focussed on activity level (e.g. courses and networks for care-farming, education, agro-tourism). As multifunctional entrepreneurship takes shape at a farm level, the support programmes should use a farm-level perspective as well.
- Finally, crucial with regard to the support of current farmers is the diversity of on-farm multifunctionality as demonstrated throughout this thesis. Farmers, both male and female farmers, are driven by different combinations of multifunctional thought and action, face different challenges, employ different learning strategies contributing to different degrees of farm-level multifunctionality and therefore have different needs with regard to fostering their multifunctional entrepreneurship. Thus, to effectively foster multifunctional entrepreneurship more tailored education and support programmes are needed.

To close, although these recommendations provide some inroads into fostering multifunctional entrepreneurship in agriculture, the limited power of formal education and support needs to be acknowledged. This is particularly the case for current multifunctional farmers who, in contrast to young farmers in school settings, are in the midst of finding their own path in learning how to become multifunctional entrepreneurs. Due to its work-related character, their entrepreneurial learning is mainly taking place 'on the job', informally, accidentally and through interaction with the work environment. Although formal education and support has a role, it should not be overestimated.









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**Appendices**

## Appendix 1: overview studied cases chapter two (situation March 2011)

Case	Name <sup>a</sup> (age)	Education level	Production- oriented activities	Multifunctional activities <sup>b</sup> (since)	Main motivation(s) <sup>c</sup>	Workforce	Farm characteristics
A	Jack (50s)	Middle level applied agriculture	- Fruit growing (cherries, apples and pears)	- Farm shop (1999)	- More control on business development - Adding value	- Jack and his son - Two full and two part-timers (shop) - Students (fruit)	In 1999, Jack sold his ancestral farm and re-started in an area with more tourism. Main motivation to re-start were the disappointing returns of his fruit working with the auction. Currently, most of his fruit (mainly cherries) is sold through his farm shop. Future developments focus on the improvement of product quality.
B	Anne and Peter (40s)	Uni. of applied sciences agriculture - middle level applied agriculture	- Switching from dairy farming to cattle breeding	- Landscape and nature management (1989) - Agro-tourism (farm games) (2003) - Small farm shop (non-food) (2004)	- More control on business development - Creating more social contacts (Peter)	- Anne and Peter (their eldest son, supportive in farming) - Students (farm games)	Anne and Peter recently stopped milking to create more room for manoeuvre. Milk production was perceived as incompatible with their ambition to professionalise their new businesses. Learning focusses on the development of the existing farm shop and marketing of farm-grown meat.
C	Mark (40s)	Middle level applied agriculture	- Dairy farming	- Farm education (2003) - Childcare (large- scale) (2007)	- Supplementing income - Re-connecting agriculture with society	- Mark and his wife - One full-time farm worker - More than ten part/ full-time childcare professionals	After having started farm education activities, Mark and his wife developed an on-farm day-care centre. In four years, the day-care centre grew rapidly and currently employs more than ten childcare professionals. Currently, Mark and his wife explore the opportunities to integrate food production, consumption and childcare on their farm.

D	Sarah (40s)	Middle level applied care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pig farming (small-scale)</li> <li>- Tree nursery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Farm education (2005) (stopping)</li> <li>- Care farming (day-care for the elderly) (2007)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Supplementing income</li> <li>- Creating own income activity (Sarah)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sarah and her husband</li> <li>- Two part-time care professionals</li> <li>- One intern, and a volunteer</li> <li>- Students (tree nursery)</li> </ul>	<p>There is a strict role division on the farm: care farming activities are Sarah's domain (nursing background), her husband manages the pig farming and the tree nursery. Currently, Sarah struggles to find enough room for manoeuvre combining many activities. Approaching EU animal welfare legislation troubles the future of the pig breeding activities and the farm as a whole.</p>
E	John (40s)	Middle level applied agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dairy farming</li> <li>- Pig farming</li> <li>- Arable farming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cheese production and selling (1970)</li> <li>- Landscape and nature management (1999)</li> <li>- Farm education (2010)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creating own income activity (John's mother)</li> <li>- Risk spreading</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- John (his wife has a full-time, off-farm job outside agriculture)</li> <li>- One full and one part-time farm worker</li> <li>- One part-time cheese maker</li> </ul>	<p>John owns and manages a mixed farm with a large-scale cheese business, started by his mother in 1970. His cheese is sold on the farm and through a large network. His role has gradually shifted from being a craftsman towards becoming increasingly more managerial and entrepreneurial. After a period of rapid growth, John will focus on the professionalisation of his current businesses.</p>
F	David and Carol (40s)	Middle level applied agriculture – administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dairy farming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Landscape and nature management (1982)</li> <li>- Agro-tourism (bed and breakfast) (2008)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creating more social contacts (David)</li> <li>- Creating own income activity (Carol)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- David and Carol (their eldest son, supportive in farming)</li> </ul>	<p>Supported by EU funding, David and Carol developed a professional bed and breakfast. Although successful (attracting many international tourists), it remains a side-activity and mainly Carol's business. Future developments are uncertain but focus on the dairy farm.</p>

<sup>a</sup> For privacy reasons, respondents' names have been changed.

<sup>b</sup> Main multifunctional activities are in bold.

<sup>c</sup> In order of importance.

The table is drawn from Seuneke et al. (2013).

## Appendix 2: questionnaire ‘Dynamics and Robustness’, phase two (N=120)

Structured questionnaire, interviews phase two, ‘Dynamics and Robustness of Multifunctional Agriculture’ (translated from Dutch)

Research area:	
Town:	
Name of interviewer:	
Date:	
Name of respondent: (Will not being linked to the results)	
Gender:	
Age:	

### 1. Farm labour input (in hours per week)

Personal share	
Share by spouse	
Share by other family members	
External labour (fixed)	
External labour (variable)	
Share through cooperation	

### 2. Farm size (production-oriented share)

Total land use (in hectares) (owned + leased)	
Land use specified for main activity (hectares):	
-	
-	
-	
-	

### Other parameters for farm size (production-oriented share)

Total production-oriented turnover (Euros per year)	
Milk quota (kilos)	
Livestock (number of animals)	
	-
	-

## 3. Which multifunctional activities are you involved in? Since when? And on which scale?

Multifunctional activity	Present?		Since...	Estimated turnover
	Yes	No		
Landscape and nature management (paid)				
Production of quality/regional products (please define!)				
Selling of products				
Care farming				
On-farm education				
Agro-tourism				
Childcare				
Other:				

## 4. How important were the following motivations to start the new activity/ies?

	Very important	Important	Neutral	Not very important	Unimportant
Generating additional income					
My spouse/a family member wished to create a new income activity					
We wanted to gain more control over the development of our farm					
We wanted to gain more control over the sales revenues of our products					
We wanted to enlarge our business succession perspectives					
We wished to have more contact with consumers / citizens / townspeople					
We wished to help citizens re-connect with agriculture					
We used already existing market opportunities					
It was a small step after the activities we already started					
We were inspired by colleagues in our region					
There was active external support to start new activities					
There were interesting subsidies					
We wanted to use the available family labour					
We wanted to spread risk by diversifying our activities					
Other:					

5. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	I strongly agree	I partly agree	Neutral	I partly disagree	I strongly disagree
Our production and multifunctional-oriented activities are closely interwoven					
This way of doing business suits our values regarding sustainability					
The development of our multifunctional activities depends on maintaining a production-oriented basis					
Our production-oriented activities do not differ significantly from those of the average farm					
The combination of agriculture with new activities enables us to carry on farming here					
Our multifunctional farm contributes more to the regional economy than do conventional farms					
We actively try to create new connections between agriculture and society					
When one has gone multifunctional, there is no way back to conventional farming					

6. Since the start of multifunctionality, how has primary production been developed?

	Strong growth (> +50%)	Gradual growth (+30-40%)	Stabilisation (0 - +10%)	Gradual decrease (-30-40%)	Strong decrease (>-50%)
Land ownership					
Land use (leased land included)					
Turnover					
Labour input					

7. How have multifunctional activities been developed since their start? (specify if possible!)

	Strong growth (> +50%)	Gradual growth (+30-40%)	Stabilisation (0 - +10%)	Gradual decrease (-30-40%)	Strong decrease (>-50%)
Turnover of multifunctional activities (total)					
Activity 1					
Activity 2					
Activity 3					
Labour input activities (total)					
Activity 1					
Activity 2					
Activity 3					

8. How is the family income composed (in %)?

	from primary production
	from the multifunctional activities
	off-farm income

9a. Since the start of the multifunctional activities, how has the importance of any off-farm income developed?

- Off-farm income has become very important
- Off-farm income has become moderately important
- Off-farm income has become less important
- Off-farm income is not very important anymore
- Almost nothing has changed
- No off-farm income

9b. Since the start of the multifunctional activities, how has the farm income developed?

- The multifunctional activities have become very important
- The multifunctional activities have become moderately important
- The multifunctional activities have become less important
- The multifunctional activities have become not very important
- Almost nothing has changed

10. To what extent are you satisfied with the development of your different sources of income?

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied
Farm income from primary production (five year average)				
Farm income from multifunctional activities (total)				
Farm income MF activity 1				
Farm income MF activity 2				
Farm income MF activity 3				
Total family income (if applicable, off-farm income included)				

11. How would you position the following investments since the start of the multifunctional activities?

	Strongly invested (> €50,000 per year)	Moderately invested (€10-50,000 per year)	Hardly invested (<€10,000 per year)
Agricultural activities (primary production)			
Multifunctional activities (in total)			
MF activity 1			
MF activity 2			
MF activity 3			

12. How important are the following partners for further business development?

	Very important	Important	Not very important	Unimportant
Other multifunctional farmers within own region				
Other rural entrepreneurs within own region				
Other multifunctional farmers / rural entrepreneurs outside own region				
New market partners / customers / suppliers				
Regional knowledge institutions				
National knowledge institutions				
Local governments				
Nature organisations				
Other rural organisations such as...				
Other organisations / parties / partners				
-				
-				



13. How important were the following personal factors in relation to the start of the new activities?

	Very important	Important	Not very important	Unimportant
We had some experiences through small experiments				
Back then, we were convinced that starting new activities would become the future				
The new activity/ies suited our personal qualities				
The new activity/ies suited our professional training				
The new activity/ies suited our prior work experience outside agriculture				
Managing a conventional farm does not fit with our personal qualities				
Other:				

14. Since the start of the new activities, to what degree have you undertaken the following learning activities?

	To a very high degree	To a high degree	To a slight degree	To a very slight degree
Comparing practices with colleagues				
Consulting colleagues for personal feedback				
Consulting spouse and other family members for personal feedback				
Consulting our adviser for personal feedback				
Consulting an expert to identify new opportunities				
Experimenting by doing things differently				
Attending a course/training before starting (a) new activity/ies				
Looking for information in agricultural magazines, in books on the internet				
Visiting/observing colleagues with similar business activities (other (multifunctional) farmers)				
Observing/interacting with other rural entrepreneurs (non-farmers)				
Discussing with professional advisers				
Exchanging information with colleagues during informal meetings (other (multifunctional) farmers)				
Joining a multifunctional cooperative				
Other:				

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15. Can you position your investment plans for the coming 5-10 years below? (please specify if possible!)

	Large investments (>€50,000 per year)	Average investments (€10-50,000 per year)	Small investments (<€10,000 per year)
Agricultural activities (primary production)			
Multifunctional activities (in total)			
MF activity 1			
MF activity 2			
MF activity 3			

16. How important are the following factors to realise your business development plans?

	Very important	Important	Not very important	Unimportant
International market developments				
Regional market developments				
Better cooperation with other multifunctional farmers in the region				
Better cooperation with other rural entrepreneurs in the region				
Better acknowledgement of new business activities by lenders (e.g. banks)				
Market support				
Collaborative governments				
Consensus within the family with regard to our future development strategy				
Approval by local residents				
Financial support				
Knowledge support				
Further development of own expertise				
Further development of partner's/family's expertise				
Further development employees' expertise				
Other:				

17. Is there a business successor?

- Yes, see question 17b
- Maybe, see question 17b
- This is not yet an issue
- No

17b. Do you think your successor will carry on with all present business activities?

- No, he/she will carry on with the multifunctional activity/ies
- No, he/she will only carry on with the production-oriented activities
- Yes, he/she will continue in a similar way
- Different, namely...
- This is not an issue

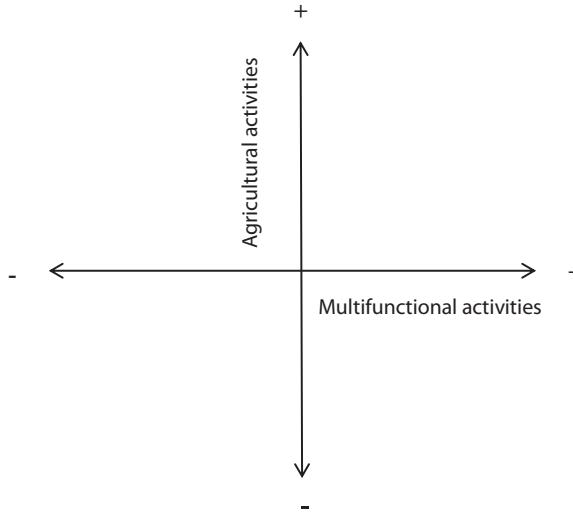
18. To what extent do you consider succession possible?

- Possible
- Possible, but not easy
- Possible, but it will require new structures and arrangements
- Impossible
- This is not an issue

19. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	I strongly agree	I partly agree	Neutral	I partly disagree	I strongly disagree
The combination of activities on our farm makes succession more difficult					
There are more successors interested in our farm than in a conventional one					
Taking over our farm as a family farm is difficult, new forms of organisation are needed					

20. Can you position the development of the other multifunctional farms in your region in the following figure?



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21. How important are the following factors in explaining the differences between other multifunctional farms in your region?

	Very important	Important	Not very important	Unimportant
The size of the primary production at the start the new activities				
Motivations to start the new activities				
Location specific opportunities				
Owner-managers' age				
Acquired entrepreneurial competencies				
Investment opportunities				
Regional collaborative capacities				
Capacity to arrange support				
Possible tensions with general rural entrepreneurs in the area				
Other:				

22. Are you interested in attending one of the regional dissemination meetings planned in the project?

- Yes, please send me an invitation
- No thanks
- No thanks, please inform me on paper

## Appendix 3: questionnaire 'Dynamics and Robustness', phase three (N=18)

Semi-structured questionnaire, in-depth interviews phase three, 'Dynamics and Robustness of Multifunctional Agriculture' (translated from Dutch)

### Work

1. Can you elaborate on the role division within the farm? Who is doing what?
2. Who coordinates the combination of activities on a higher level?
  - a. How does that work?
  - b. Who is making any strategic decisions?
  - c. How did he/she learn to do that?
3. Can you describe an average working day and week?
  - a. Has the work changed since the start of the new business activities?
  - b. If yes, for whom and how?
4. What do you think of your current work?
  - a. Is it challenging?
  - b. If yes, why?
  - c. Has it changed?

### Learning

5. How would you describe the learning process with regard to the development of the multifunctional activity/ies? Is it shared or more individual?
  - a. Can you give an example?
  - b. Has this changed since the start of the new activities?
  - c. If yes, how and why?
6. During your daily (multifunctional) work, do you ever reflect on your learning?
  - a. If yes, when and how?
  - b. Can you give an example?
  - c. Has this changed since the start of the new activities?
  - d. If yes, how and why?
7. With regard to the development of the multifunctional activity/ies, where does your personal development currently focus on?
  - a. Why?
  - b. Can you give an example?
  - c. Does formal support/education play a role here? If yes, how?
8. Can you describe a/some situation(s) which was/were meaningful with regard to your multifunctional-oriented learning (positively and/or negatively)?
  - a. What went well, what went less well?
  - b. What have you learned from it?
  - c. Have you asked someone for feedback, or help?
  - d. How would you do it now?

9. In the first interview, you told me about the development of the multifunctional activities...(explain). Am I correct?
  - a. What do these plans mean in terms of your personal development?
  - b. Do you think you can develop these skills? How are you going to work on them?
  - c. Do you see a role for formal support and/or education? If yes, why and how?
10. If you had the chance to start all over again, would you follow the same (learning) path (e.g. becoming part of that multifunctional cooperative)? Or would you act differently? Why?

**Personal aspects**

11. How would you describe yourself? I am a ... (farmer, producer, entrepreneur, ...).
  - a. Why?
  - b. Has your professional identity changed since the start of the new activities?
  - c. If yes, why and through which process/experiences?
12. What do you like about the multifunctional activities? What is satisfactory about it?
  - a. Are you self-confident? Why?
  - b. Has this changed over time?
13. How do others perceive you (e.g. family, colleagues)?
  - a. Do they have certain expectations about your role, function and performance? Why?

**The work environment (with regard to multifunctionality)**

14. Do you give each other feedback (the couple, family members, employees)?
  - a. Are there any formal work meetings?
  - b. If yes, how do they work?
  - c. Is there a good learning climate? Can you explain, give examples?
15. Is there any (external) support for your learning?
  - a. Who supports your learning and how?
16. Are there any external individuals, groups, or networks which play a role with regard to your learning?
  - a. If yes, who, what kind of groups, networks, why and how?
  - b. Has this changed since you started the new activities?

**Additional questions with regard to succession (if applicable!)**

17. In the previous interview you told me about the potential successor(s)...(explain). Am I correct?
  - a. How is/are he/she /they preparing himself/herself/themselves?
  - b. Does the successor/do the successors already have a role in the farm? And are there any off-farm activities? Explain.
18. What are essential skills for the successor(s) to run the farm successfully?
19. What would be the best preparation for someone taking over a multifunctional farm?









## Summary



## Summary

### Introduction

To find a way out of the environmental, social and economic crisis in agriculture, many European and Dutch farming families have diversified their conventional production-oriented farming activities by developing new non-farming businesses such as agro-tourism, nature and landscape management, processing and selling of farm products and, more recently in The Netherlands, professional (child)care and on-farm education. The development of such new business activities by these farmers represents a shift away from the conventional production-oriented model of agriculture, rooted in the post-WWII agricultural modernisation process, towards a paradigm of multifunctionality in which the role of agriculture goes beyond mass food production. The shift towards multifunctionality has changed farmers' (men, women) roles radically: whilst they used to operate as producers in a highly regulated and protected economic system, the development of new and *non-farming* business activities on their existing farms encourages them to re-orient, moving beyond the practices and worlds they previously took for granted and moreover developing their entrepreneurial competence.

Due to the developments in agriculture and farmers' adaptive behaviours, agricultural entrepreneurship has recently become an important field of study. Prominent in this body of literature is work focussing on farmers' entrepreneurial skills. Although this work contributed greatly to our knowledge on agricultural entrepreneurship and farmers' skills, we still know surprisingly little about the *learning process* by which, in the case of this thesis, emerging multifunctional farmers develop their entrepreneurship and associated skills. Therefore, focussing on multifunctionality in particular, this thesis aims to improve our understanding of the learning process underlying the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship. The development of farmers' multifunctional entrepreneurship is approached as a process of *entrepreneurial learning*. Apart from its value to the field of entrepreneurship in agriculture, a better understanding of the entrepreneurial learning process is also highly relevant to the work of conceptualising farm-level multifunctionality transitions. Unveiling the learning process greatly contributes to the need to better understand the internal and

more intangible drivers of individual farm-level multifunctional transitional pathways. Based on the problem definition, the following research objective was formulated:

- *Unveiling and improving the understanding of the learning process underlying the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship as well as driving farm-level multifunctional transitional pathways.*

The research objective was broken down into the following research questions corresponding with the four studies forming the heart of this thesis:

1. Which major factors underlie entrepreneurial learning in the context of emerging farm-level multifunctionality?
2. What is the relationship between the specific form of multifunctional orientation and the nature of the social capital used for entrepreneurial learning?
3. What is the relationship between farmers' entrepreneurial learning and the development of the multifunctional farm as a learning environment?
4. What specific role do women play in the learning process underlying the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship in family farms?

This thesis draws on research carried out in the Dutch project 'Dynamics and Robustness of Multifunctional Agriculture'. This project was carried out between March 2009 and July 2011 and explored the dynamics and robustness of Dutch multifunctional agriculture on an activity, farm and regional level.

The project consisted of three phases. In a first phase, a state-of-the-art-analysis was carried out to identify the main focus of the project. The second phase formed the main (empirical) part of the research project. To explore the dynamics and robustness of multifunctional agriculture on activity, farm and regional level, 120 multifunctional farmers were interviewed using a semi-structured questionnaire. The farmers were involved in various combinations of production-oriented and multifunctional activities, located in six regions throughout The Netherlands. Finally, the third phase explored the learning

process underlying the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship. For this purpose, additional in-depth interviews were held among eighteen of the 120 cases from phase two. This thesis draws on the data from the second but particularly on those collected in the third phase of this overarching project.

## The empirical studies

The body of this thesis is formed by four different studies. Each of them explores a specific aspect of the entrepreneurial learning process and answers (respectively) one of the research questions central to this thesis.

Chapter two unravels the concept of entrepreneurial learning in multifunctional agriculture and forms the basis of this thesis. The analysis of qualitative interview data collected in six different multifunctional farm cases, identified three major factors driving entrepreneurial learning in multifunctional agriculture. To become multifunctional entrepreneurs farmers have to: 1) *re-develop their entrepreneurial identity*, 2) *cross the boundaries of agriculture* and 3) *open up the family farm*.

Based on the analysis of the quantitative interview data collected in the 120 farm cases, chapter three explores the relationship between farmers' orientation towards the development of multifunctionality and the nature of the social capital used for entrepreneurial learning. The analysis shows that, apart from interacting with others for entrepreneurial learning more actively, more strongly multifunctional-oriented farmers seem to interact increasingly beyond the boundaries of their direct environments. Whereas farmers with a weak or moderate multifunctional orientation interact within their close and agricultural circles, by predominantly drawing on *bonding* social capital, their counterparts with a stronger multifunctional orientation seem increasingly to be broadening their horizons by drawing more on *bridging* social capital. These farmers can therefore potentially access new learning environments outside the agricultural domain, thereby exposing themselves to new and different ideas which in turn foster their entrepreneurial learning.

Based on a study of qualitative interview data collected in nine 'weakly' and nine 'strongly' multifunctional farm cases, representing contrasting socio-cultural, technical and organisational contexts, chapter four reveals a complex and two-sided relationship between entrepreneurial learning and the work

environment. The chapter demonstrates that although the studied farmers are all involved in entrepreneurial learning, they shape the process in different ways. Their learning consequently supports the creation of different work/learn environments which in turn foster learning differently. The two-sided relationship found in this study shows that entrepreneurial learning is not only embedded in, and affected by, its social context but rather actively (re)shapes the work environment as a site of learning.

Chapter five, finally, reports a study which aimed to understand women's particular role in the learning process that accompanies the switch towards multifunctionality and multifunctional entrepreneurship. Analysis of qualitative interview data revealed that women: 1) *introduce new identities and practices onto the farm*, 2) *provide access to new networks and learning environments*, and 3) *initiate negotiation within the farming family regarding the farm's (future) orientation towards primary production and/or multifunctionality*. All three aspects of learning are essential building blocks to the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship in family farms and mean that farm women are playing an essential role.

## Theoretical contribution

Together, the four studies contribute to a better understanding of the learning process which is considered to underlie the development of multifunctional farmers' entrepreneurship as well as to drive the development of individual farm-level multifunctional transitional pathways.

First, how can the learning process be characterised? Whereas recent literature on entrepreneurship in multifunctional agriculture has placed a strong emphasis on entrepreneurial farmers as *individuals* developing their multifunctional identities and entrepreneurial skills, this thesis demonstrates that *'the emerging entrepreneurial farmer'* does not exist. Instead, multifunctional entrepreneurship is developed and expressed jointly by the couple, the family and often in partnership with others involved in the family business. The learning process is furthermore found to be strongly *work-related*. Although farmers' learning can involve more formal and deliberate practices (such as participating in a farmers' learning network, attending a course), the bulk is taking place informally, accidentally and as a side-effect of daily work. As the learning is highly

embedded in daily practice and farmers are primarily focussing on doing their job, learning moreover often occurs unconsciously. By presenting learning as a work-related process, this thesis moreover unveils its *socially situated nature*. This means that farmers do not only develop their entrepreneurship individually and cognitively, but rather predominantly through participation in and interaction with their social context. Crucial in understanding farmers' learning as a work-related and socially situated phenomenon is moreover the *two-sided relationship* found in this thesis. This means that farmers' learning is not only embedded in and affected by its social context but also actively (re)shapes the work environment as a site of learning.

Second, as well as underlying the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship, the entrepreneurial learning process brought to light in this thesis is seen as the actual motor driving the shift towards farm-level multifunctionality. By unveiling the learning, this thesis greatly contributes to a better understanding of the internal and more intangible drivers of farm-level multifunctional transitional pathways. By re-developing their entrepreneurial identities, crossing the boundaries of agriculture and opening up the family farm, the studied farmers are gradually managing to break free from the productivist regime, find their path towards becoming multifunctional entrepreneurs and acquire the tools to push their farm in the direction of multifunctionality. The development of different identities is crucial in the learning process. If farmers are unable or unwilling to legitimise their new activities and re-invent themselves as multifunctional farm entrepreneurs, it is unlikely that they will cross the boundaries of the farm and the agricultural domain for participation and learning, nor re-organise the farm to develop stronger degrees of farm-level multifunctionality. By focussing on 'the family' and more specifically on women's and men's roles, this thesis moreover demonstrates that within the family farm, women are key actors in the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship and thus the shift towards multifunctionality. Whereas men's family background and prominent position in farm management has tied them to (production-oriented) agriculture, the women generally have more 'room for manoeuvre'. Due to the frequency of their non-farming backgrounds, training and off-farm activities, women are more flexible and capable of opening up to new agricultural models, re-developing their identities and crossing the boundaries of the agricultural domain.







# Samenvatting



## Samenvatting

### Introductie

Om zich een uitweg te verschaffen uit de milieu-, sociale en economische crisis in de landbouw hebben vele Europese en Nederlandse boeren gezinnen hun conventionele, op productie gerichte, agrarische activiteiten uitgebreid met nieuwe, niet-agrarische, activiteiten. Voorbeelden van dergelijke activiteiten zijn agrotourisme, natuur- en landschapsbeheer, het verwerken en vermarkten van agrarische producten en, meer recentelijk in Nederland, professionele kinderopvang, zorg en boerderijeducatie. De ontwikkeling van dergelijke activiteiten vertegenwoordigt een verschuiving van het in de naoorlogse agrarische modernisering gewortelde productiemodel naar een model waarin de rol van de landbouw veel verder gaat dan de productie van voedsel alleen. De verschuiving naar een meer 'multifunctionele' landbouw heeft de rol van de boeren (mannen, vrouwen) radicaal veranderd. Vanuit een situatie waarin boeren de rol vervullen van producent binnen een sterk gereguleerd en beschermd economisch systeem, zorgt de ontwikkeling van nieuwe niet-agrarische bedrijfsactiviteiten dat ze zich heroriënteren, hun vaak als vanzelfsprekend beschouwde bedrijfsvoering en agrarische netwerken ontstijgen en daarbij bovendien hun ondernemerschapvaardigheden ontwikkelen.

Door de ontwikkelingen in de landbouw en de daarmee samenhangende veranderingen in het gedrag van boeren, is agrarisch ondernemerschap een belangrijk onderwerp van studie geworden. De literatuur over ondernemerschapvaardigheden heeft hierin een prominente plaats. Hoewel deze studies hebben geleid tot veel kennis over agrarisch ondernemerschap en essentiële vaardigheden, is er echter nog weinig bekend over het leerproces waardoor, in het geval van dit proefschrift, beginnende multifunctionele boeren hun ondernemerschap en bijbehorende vaardigheden ontwikkelen. Dit proefschrift richt zich daarom op het blootleggen van dit leerproces dat ten grondslag ligt aan de ontwikkeling van multifunctioneel ondernemerschap binnen voorheen voornamelijk op productie gerichte agrarische bedrijven. De ontwikkeling van het multifunctioneel ondernemerschap van boeren wordt binnen dit proefschrift gezien als een proces van *ondernemend leren*. Naast het feit dat meer inzicht in het proces van ondernemend leren van waarde

is voor het beter begrijpen van deze multifunctionele vorm van agrarisch ondernemerschap, is het erg relevant voor het conceptualiseren van transities naar multifunctionaliteit op bedrijfsniveau. Het blootleggen van de leerprocessen draagt in grote mate bij aan het begrip over de ontastbare drijvende krachten achter de transitietrajecten van individuele bedrijven naar multifunctionaliteit. Op basis van deze probleemstelling is de doelstelling van dit proefschrift als volgt geformuleerd:

- *Het verbeteren van de kennis over het leerproces dat zowel ten grondslag ligt aan de ontwikkeling van multifunctioneel ondernemerschap als de drijvende kracht vormt achter de transitietrajecten van bedrijven naar multifunctionaliteit.*

Deze doelstelling kan worden vertaald in de volgende onderzoeksvragen die corresponderen met de vier studies die samen het hart van dit proefschrift vormen:

1. Welke factoren liggen ten grondslag aan ondernemend leren in de context van ontwikkelende multifunctionaliteit?
2. Wat is de relatie tussen de specifieke multifunctionele oriëntatie van boeren en de aard van het sociale kapitaal dat zij gebruiken voor ondernemend leren?
3. Wat is de relatie tussen het ondernemende leren van boeren en het in ontwikkeling zijnde multifunctionele landbouwbedrijf als leeromgeving?
4. Welke specifieke rol spelen vrouwen in het leerproces dat ten grondslag ligt aan de ontwikkeling van multifunctioneel ondernemerschap binnen het agrarische gezinsbedrijf?

Dit proefschrift bouwt voort op onderzoek dat werd uitgevoerd in het kader van het project 'Dynamiek en Robuustheid van Multifunctionele Landbouw'. Dit project liep van maart 2009 tot juli 2011 en bracht de dynamiek en robuustheid in kaart van de Nederlandse multifunctionele landbouw op zowel activiteits-, bedrijfs- als regionaal niveau.

Het project besloeg drie fasen. In de eerste fase werd een globale literatuurstudie uitgevoerd om het onderzoeksgebied te verkennen en de onderzoeksfocus van het project nader te bepalen. De tweede fase vormde het belangrijkste (empirische) deel van het onderzoeksproject. Om de dynamiek en robuustheid van multifunctionele landbouw, op activiteits-, bedrijfs- en regionaal niveau, in kaart te brengen werden in dit deel van het project 120 multifunctionele boeren bezocht en geïnterviewd met behulp van semigestructureerde vragenlijsten. De geïnterviewde boeren ontwikkelden verschillende combinaties van productiegerichte en multifunctionele bedrijfsactiviteiten en waren gevestigd in zes verschillende, verspreid over het land liggende, plattelandsgebieden. De derde fase van het project richtte zich ten slotte op het leerproces dat ten grondslag ligt aan de ontwikkeling van multifunctioneel ondernemerschap. Hiertoe werden aanvullende diepte-interviews gehouden met achttien van de 120 in fase twee bezochte en ondervraagde boeren. Dit proefschrift bouwt voornamelijk voort op data verzameld in de derde fase, en in mindere mate ook op data uit de tweede fase van dit overkoepelende onderzoeksproject.

## De empirische studies

Het hart van dit proefschrift wordt gevormd door vier verschillende studies. Elke studie gaat in op een specifiek aspect van het proces van ondernemend leren en beantwoordt respectievelijk één van de centraal staande onderzoeksvragen.

Hoofdstuk twee ontrafelt ten eerste het concept van ondernemend leren binnen de multifunctionele landbouw en vormt de basis van dit proefschrift. Deze studie, waarbij kwalitatieve data afkomstig van interviews met boeren van zes verschillende landbouwbedrijven werden geanalyseerd, bracht drie cruciale factoren aan het licht die ondernemend leren in de multifunctionele landbouw stimuleren. Om zich tot multifunctionele ondernemer te ontwikkelen moeten boeren: 1) *hun ondernemersidentiteit herdefiniëren*, 2) *de grenzen van het bedrijf en de landbouw overschrijden* en 3) *het gezinsbedrijf openbreken*.

Op basis van de analyse van de kwantitatieve data afkomstig van de interviews met de 120 boeren, brengt hoofdstuk drie de relatie in kaart tussen de oriëntatie van boeren wat betreft multifunctionaliteit en de aard van het sociaal kapitaal dat zij gebruiken bij ondernemend leren. De analyse laat zien dat, naast hun over het algemeen actievere interactiegedrag, boeren met een

sterkere multifunctionele oriëntatie meer lijken te interacteren met actoren buiten de grenzen van hun directe omgeving. Terwijl boeren met zwakkere of meer gematigde multifunctionele oriëntaties bij voorkeur interacteren binnen de voor hen vertrouwde en agrarische sociale milieus, door voornamelijk te bogen op *bindend* sociaal kapitaal, lijken hun sterker multifunctioneel georiënteerde collega's hun horizon te hebben verbreed door in toenemende mate gebruik te maken van meer *overbruggend* sociaal kapitaal. Laatstgenoemden verschaffen zichzelf hiermee toegang tot nieuwe leeromgevingen buiten het bekende en agrarische domein, stellen zich bloot aan nieuwe en andere ideeën en stimuleren daarmee hun ondernemende leerproces in sterke mate.

Hoofdstuk vier legt de complexe en tweezijdige relatie bloot die bestaat tussen ondernemend leren en de veranderende werk/leeromgeving. Dit gebeurt op basis van kwalitatieve interview-data die werden verzameld onder negen 'zwak' en negen 'sterk' multifunctioneel georiënteerde landbouwbedrijven, met bijbehorende verschillen in sociaal-culturele, technische en organisatorische context. Dit hoofdstuk laat zien dat, hoewel alle boeren in de studie bezig zijn met ondernemend leren, ze dit proces op verschillende manieren vormgeven. Het leerproces stimuleert daarnaast de vorming van leer/werkomgevingen die op hun beurt het leerproces weer op verschillende manieren beïnvloeden. Deze wederzijdse relatie laat zien dat ondernemend leren niet alleen is ingebed in en wordt beïnvloedt door de sociale context, maar zeker ook een actieve rol speelt bij het (om)vormen van de werkomgeving tot (een stimulerende) leerplek.

Hoofdstuk vijf, tot slot, beschrijft een studie die tot doel had te onderzoeken hoe de specifieke rol van vrouwen is in relatie tot het leerproces dat gepaard gaat met de verschuiving naar multifunctionaliteit en de ontwikkeling van multifunctioneel ondernemerschap binnen het agrarische gezinsbedrijf. Uit de analyse van kwalitatieve interviewdata kwam naar voren dat vrouwen: 1) *nieuwe identiteiten en praktijken in het gezinsbedrijf introduceren*, 2) *zichzelf en hun gezin toegang verschaffen tot nieuwe netwerken en leeromgevingen*, en 3) *binnen het gezinsbedrijf een onderhandelingsproces initiëren en stimuleren ten aanzien van de toekomstige koers richting primaire productie en/of multifunctionaliteit*.

## Theoretische bijdrage

De vier studies tezamen dragen bij aan meer inzicht in het leerproces dat zowel ten grondslag ligt aan de ontwikkeling van multifunctioneel ondernemerschap bij boeren als bijdraagt aan de ontwikkeling van transitietrajecten van individuele bedrijven naar multifunctionaliteit.

Allereerst, hoe ziet dat leerproces er precies uit? Terwijl recente literatuur over ondernemerschap in de multifunctionele landbouw veel nadruk legt op ondernemende boeren als *individueen* die een multifunctionele identiteit en ondernemerschapsvaardigheden ontwikkelen, laat dit proefschrift zien dat 'de ondernemende boer' niet bestaat. Multifunctioneel ondernemerschap wordt niet individueel en in afzondering maar veel meer gezamenlijk tussen samenlevingspartners ontwikkeld en geuit, binnen het gezin en vaak in samenwerking met anderen betrokken bij het bedrijf. Het leerproces blijkt daarnaast sterk *werk-gerelateerd*, want hoewel het leren van boeren formele en intentionele activiteiten kan beslaan (het deelnemen aan een studieclub bijvoorbeeld of het volgen van een training), gebeurt een aanzienlijk deel van het leren informeel, bij toeval en als bijeffect van het dagelijks werk. Omdat het leren in sterke mate onderdeel is van de dagelijkse praktijk en boeren voornamelijk gericht zijn op het doen van hun werk, is leren vooral iets onbewusts. Doordat het leren voornamelijk als een werk-gerelateerd proces wordt beschouwd, onthult dit proefschrift daarnaast haar *sociaal gesitueerde* karakter. Dit betekent dat boeren hun ondernemerschap niet alleen op een individuele en cognitieve manier ontwikkelen, maar veel meer door deelname aan en interactie met hun sociale context. Cruciaal in het begrijpen van het ondernemende leren als een werk-gerelateerd en sociaal gesitueerd fenomeen is bovendien de in dit proefschrift aan het licht gekomen tweezijdige relatie tussen leren en de werk/leeromgeving. Deze tweezijdige relatie houdt in dat het leren door boeren niet alleen onderdeel is van, en beïnvloed wordt door, de sociale context, maar dat het ook actief bijdraagt aan het (om)vormen van de werkomgeving als leeromgeving.

Het ondernemende leerproces dat in dit proefschrift aan het licht is gebracht kan, ten tweede, ook worden beschouwd als de drijvende kracht achter de ontwikkeling van multifunctionaliteit op bedrijfsniveau. Door het blootleggen van het leren draagt dit proefschrift in grote mate bij aan de kennis over de ontastbare drijvende krachten achter de transitietrajecten van individuele bedrijven naar multifunctionaliteit. Door het herdefiniëren van hun

ondernemersidentiteit, het overschrijden van de grenzen van hun bedrijf en de landbouw en het openbreken van het gezinsbedrijf, lukt het de boeren zich geleidelijk te bevrijden van het productivistische regime, een weg te vinden naar multifunctioneel ondernemerschap en de middelen te verwerven die nodig zijn om hun bedrijf multifunctioneler in te richten. De ontwikkeling van een nieuwe identiteit is echter cruciaal in het leerproces. Wanneer boeren onwelwillend of niet in staat zijn om hun nieuwe activiteiten als legitiem te beschouwen en zichzelf te (her)definiëren als multifunctionele agrarische ondernemers, is het onwaarschijnlijk dat ze, om te leren en te participeren, verder kijken dan de vertrouwde omgeving van het gezinsbedrijf en het agrarische domein, noch het bedrijf durven te reorganiseren om de weg vrij te maken voor meer multifunctionaliteit. Doordat dit proefschrift zich ook nadrukkelijk richt op 'het gezinsbedrijf' en meer specifiek op de rol van vrouwen en mannen binnen deze context, wordt bovendien duidelijk dat vrouwen een cruciale rol spelen in de ontwikkeling van multifunctioneel ondernemerschap en daarmee in het transitieproces naar multifunctionaliteit. Terwijl mannen door hun familiale achtergrond en prominente positie in het bedrijfsmanagement aan de (productiegeoriënteerde) landbouw zijn gebonden, lijken vrouwen meer 'bewegingsvrijheid' te hebben. Door hun vaak niet agrarische achtergrond, opleiding en activiteiten zijn vrouwen flexibeler en beter in staat om zich open te stellen voor nieuwe agrarische bedrijfsmodellen, hun identiteit te (her)definiëren en zich buiten de vertrouwde omgeving van het agrarische domein te begeven.









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dankwoord**



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Dit proefschrift is voortgekomen uit het project 'Dynamiek en Robuustheid van Multifunctionele Landbouw' waarin ik nauw met een aantal collega's van Rurale Sociologie heb samengewerkt. Henk, Rudolf en natuurlijk Els, dank, jullie zijn echt toffe collega's! Henk en Rudolf, fijn dat jullie altijd in zijn voor koffie en een goed gesprek. Henk, leuk dat we voor het project veel samen hebben gedaan en voor de verhuizing een kamer hebben gedeeld. Ik heb veel van je geleerd. Els, je hebt mij van de ondergang gered! 120 interviews, dat zijn er heel erg veel! Het was erg leuk om dat samen aan te pakken. Ik hoop dat we ook in de toekomst contact houden en zo nu en dan kunnen blijven 'zuurstokken'.

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**Pieter**

Wageningen, March 2014

Ac







**About the author**



## Curriculum Vitae

Pieter Seuneke was born on the 26<sup>th</sup> of August 1982, in Tilburg, The Netherlands (NL). After having been awarded his HAVO diploma at the d'Oultremontcollege in Drunen in 2000 (higher general secondary education), he started a BAsC programme Education and Knowledge Management at Stoas University of Applied Sciences and Teacher Education. Stoas is a professional university for teachers, trainers and extension specialists operating in the field of agriculture and formerly located in 's-Hertogenbosch (NL) (currently in Wageningen). He obtained his BAsC degree in 2004.

After a gap year taking some BSc and MSc courses in Environmental Sociology and Social Geography at the Radboud University in Nijmegen (NL), Pieter started his MSc at Wageningen University in 2005. Here, he took part in the programme Management of Agro-ecological Knowledge and Social Change (MAKS). MAKS is an international and inter-disciplinary MSc programme which focusses on socio-technical innovation and change processes in agriculture and rural areas. Pieter obtained his MSc degree at the Communication and Innovation Studies Group with a thesis on the involvement of citizens in participatory land-reform processes in different parts of The Netherlands.

After his graduation at Wageningen University in 2007, Pieter worked as a consultant at respectively Schuttelaar & Partners in The Hague (NL) (a communications consultancy firm for sustainable innovations in food, agriculture and human health) and the (commercial) project department of the Northern Dutch Farmers' Organisation (LTO Noord), in Haarlem (NL).

In 2009 he returned to academia as a junior researcher at the Rural Sociology Group of Wageningen University. For two years, he worked on the Dutch research project 'Dynamics and Robustness of Multifunctional Agriculture' which was carried out in collaboration with the Education and Competence Studies Group of Wageningen University. During the course of the project, Pieter was offered to stay for another two years at the Rural Sociology Group to work on his PhD, using the Dutch multifunctionality project as its basis.

After submitting his PhD thesis in January 2014, Pieter continued his academic career as a postdoctoral researcher at the Farming Systems Ecology Group of Wageningen University. In the context of the European research project PURE (focussing on the reduction of the use of pesticides in European agriculture) and in collaboration with agronomists from INRA in Montpellier

(France), he is studying participatory agricultural research projects – or ‘co-innovation processes’ – being carried out in different European countries.

Pieter is a keen gardener, competition rower and is passionate about (social) history, arts and antiques (furniture). He is living together with his girlfriend in Wageningen.

Pieter Seuneke

E-mail: [pieter.seuneke@wur.nl](mailto:pieter.seuneke@wur.nl)

Phone nr.: +31 (0)6 23 60 43 81

## Publications

### Journal articles

**Seuneke, P., Lans, T., Wiskerke, J.S.C., 2013.** Moving beyond entrepreneurial skills: key factors driving entrepreneurial learning in multifunctional agriculture. *Journal of Rural Studies* 32, 208-219.

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presented at the X<sup>th</sup> Rural Entrepreneurship Conference 'Developments in rural entrepreneurship', 31 May – 1 June 2012, Aberdeen, United Kingdom.

**Seuneke, P., Lans, T., Wiskerke, J.S.C., 2012.** From 'weak' to 'strong' multifunctionality: entrepreneurial learning in Dutch multifunctional agriculture. Paper presented at the ISBE (Institute for Small Business and Entrepreneurship) Conference 2012, 7 – 8 November 2012, Dublin, Ireland.

**Seuneke, P., Bock, Bettina, B., 2013.** The role of farm women towards the emergence and development of multifunctional entrepreneurship on family farms: an entrepreneurial learning approach. Paper presented at the XXVth ESRS (European Society for Rural Sociology) Congress, 29 July – 1 August 2013, Florence, Italy.

Research reports (output from the Dutch research project 'Dynamics and Robustness of Multifunctional Agriculture')

Oostindie, H.A., Broekhuizen, van, R.E., **Seuneke, P., Wiskerke, J.S.C., 2009.** Dynamiek en Robuustheid van Multifunctionele Landbouw. Rapportage fase 1: stand van zaken. Wageningen University, Wageningen, The Netherlands. (Dynamics and robustness of multifunctional agriculture. Report research phase 1: state-of-the-art).

Oostindie, H.A., **Seuneke, P., Broekhuizen, van, R.E., Hegger, E., Wiskerke, J.S.C., 2011.** Dynamiek en robuustheid van multifunctionele landbouw. Rapportage onderzoeksfase 2: empirisch onderzoek onder 120 multifunctionele landbouwbedrijven. Wageningen University, Wageningen, The Netherlands. (Dynamics and robustness of multifunctional agriculture. Report research phase 2: empirical research among 120 multifunctional farmers).

**Seuneke, P., Lans, T., 2011.** Dynamiek en robuustheid van multifunctionele landbouw. Rapportage onderzoeksfase 3: leren en competentieontwikkeling. Wageningen University, Wageningen, The Netherlands (Dynamics and robustness of multifunctional agriculture. Report research phase 3: learning and competence development).

## Completed Training and Supervision Plan

### Wageningen School of Social Sciences (WASS)



Wageningen School  
of Social Sciences

Name of the learning activity	Department/ Institute	Year	ECTS*
<b>A) Project related competences</b>			
PhD competence assessment	Wageningen Graduate Schools (WGS)	2011	0.3
From topic to proposal	Wageningen Graduate School of Social Sciences (WASS)	2011	4
Writing research proposal		2011	6
Gender studies aspects in food, rural and agricultural research (master class with Prof. Carolyn Sachs, Pennsylvania State University, Pennsylvania, USA)	WASS (WUR Gender Studies)	2012	0
Last stretch of the PhD programme	WASS	2013	0
<b>B) General research related competences</b>			
Information literacy and introduction to EndNote X4	WGS (Wageningen UR Library)	2011	0.6
Techniques for writing and presenting scientific papers	WGS	2011	1.2
Project and time management	WGS	2011	1.5
Scientific publishing	WGS	2011	0.3
<b>Presentations at international scientific conferences</b>			
<i>'Entrepreneurial learning in Dutch multifunctional agriculture'</i>	International Conference on Multifunctional Agriculture and Urban-Rural Relations, Wageningen, The Netherlands	2012	2
<i>'Leaving the trusted environment: entrepreneurial learning in Dutch multifunctional agriculture'</i>	Xth Rural Entrepreneurship Conference, The Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, UK	2012	2
<i>'From 'weak' to 'strong' multifunctionality: entrepreneurial learning in Dutch multifunctional agriculture'</i>	The ISBE (Institute for Small Business and Entrepreneurship) Conference 2012, Dublin, Ireland	2012	2
<i>'Moving beyond entrepreneurial skills: key factors driving entrepreneurial learning in Dutch multifunctional agriculture'</i>	The XXVth ESRS (European Society for Rural Sociology) Congress, Florence, Italy	2013	2
<i>'The role of farm women towards the emergence and development of multifunctional entrepreneurship on family farms: an entrepreneurial learning approach'</i>	The XXVth ESRS Congress, Florence, Italy	2013	2

**C) Career related competences/personal development**

Tutoring (BSc) students and facilitating group work, course RDS-10306: 'Inleiding beheer en gebruik van natuurlijke hulpbronnen' (Introduction to the use and management of natural resources)	Wageningen University – Rural Development Sociology Group	2010	2
Tutoring (MSc) students and facilitating group work, EU Intensive Programme on rural development 2012 (two weeks)	Hosted by Aleksandras Stulginskis University, Kaunas, Lithuania	2012	2
Career assessment	WGS	2012	1.5
Mobilising your scientific network	WGS	2012	1
Visiting researcher at the Nordland Research Institute, Bodø, Norway	Nordland Research Institute, Bodø, Norway	2012	6
<b>Total</b>			<b>36.4</b>

\*One credit according to ECTS is on average equivalent to 28 hours of study load



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## **Photographs**

Taskforce Multifunctional Agriculture (NL, 2008-2012)

(The farmers caught on the photographs were not part of the research)

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