Reviewer comments and actions taken

*Local small business development and state-society synergy in rural areas – a matter of social capital and trust?*

Reviewer 1:

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| **Review comments** | **Actions taken by author** |
| 1. The term “trust” should be defined more in a way that will help describe the relationship being explored. | A developed and deeper theoretical review of “trust” has been made (see p. 7-8). |
| 2. There were a few times that the reader cannot determine whether the author is expressing an opinion or citing a study to support it | This has been attended to by reviewing the entire text. |
| 3. No hypotheses are stated. | A research question has been formulated (see “introduction”) |
| 4. The number of interviewees was also small and not adequate to make a representative sampling. This is surprising because it claimed to be a longitudinal study. | The term “longitudinal case-study” has been removed and number of interviewees has been clarified. After the 24 interviews were conducted, saturation was reached. Hence it was decided not to increase the sample. See p. 13. |
| 5. There is also no clear proportion between the questionnaires sent to the business owners and municipal officers. | The decision was made to disregard the quantitative part of the study and make it a purely qualitative study. This since the response rate of SBOs for the questionnaire was too low. |
| 6. The author explains, “The reason why few municipal politicians and officials were interviewed was because no more wanted to participate.” There is a need to explain why this was so. | This statement has been elaborated on in order to make “the reason” clearer. See p. 13. |
| 7. The quantitative results were not mentioned in the study. Treatments of survey data. | The decision was made to disregard the quantitative part of the study and make it a purely qualitative study. This since the response rate of SBOs for the questionnaire was too low. |
| 8. The qualitative instrument in the case-study was a single question. What this main question was about was not mentioned at all by the author. | I am not sure I understand this comment. It would be appreciated if I could get more information in order to attend to the comment. |
| 9. There was also no mention of whether the instruments used to gather data were tested for validity and reliability. | Triangulation of data sources was used in order to establish trustworthiness of the study, as is commonly done to ensure validity and reliability in qualitative studies. See p. 12 |
| 10. There is a need to explain the instrument employed in the study, namely, the indicator extent of trust in the municipality as a measurement (Grootaert et al. 2002). | This indicator has been explained further and set into the analytical context. See p. 13-14. |
| 11. Results of the quantitative data gathered were not included in the paper. | The decision was made to disregard the quantitative part of the study and make it a purely qualitative study. This since the response rate of SBOs for the questionnaire was too low. |
| 12. This is not the standard way of presenting the findings and results of a study. The author needs to present the bare findings and results, and discuss their meanings, themes, and patterns in a separate section of the paper. | The results and findings have been re-written. The meanings, themes and patterns are then discussed in a following section. |
| 13. The three major points emerged from the qualitative data need to be explained and supported by previous research. This was somehow done by the author in the presentation of findings | A discussion has been made in the “conclusion” section, explaining and supporting the three major points by previous research. |

Reviewer 2:

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| **Review comments** | **Actions taken by author** |
| 1. One way forward would be for you to develop a more complete model of SSS fitted to the north Swedish context, i.e. including SBO, municipal authorities, the state and large corporations, and then say that, in this particular study you solely focus on the SBO-municipality synergy, (see comments on “concepts”). | In the introduction a model of the political organization is presented. With an explanation of the stand-points taken in this article regarding “state” and “society”. |
| 2. A second main concern that I have with your conceptual background section is how you refer to trust and social capital. You are right to refer to them, as these have been prominent in trying to explain how local development processes come about in rural contexts. Again, what is not clear is how the use of the SSS framework adds to these discussions. | The conceptual background has been elaborated and revised to meet the concern stated in this comment. |
| 3. I think that there is a missing section in your conceptual background part which would discuss how the SSS enables to bring into coherence these debates on social capital and trust. Again, in doing so, you would not just review the literature, but also emphasize your contribution to it. | The literature has been more widely reviewed and the discussion has more evolved around how SSS, social capital and trust are connected in SBD. |
| 4. What would be more interesting would be to measure the density of businesses of different sizes (5 to 10 employees, 10 to 50 etc…) in different sectors of activity. This is important because your interviews are with SBO from different sectors, so it would illustrate how your sample fits with the local economic structure. | A table including this information has been added in the section describing the cases. |
| 5. One major concern that I have with your methodology is your use of the indicator “extent of trust in the municipality” as measurement (Grootaert et al. 2002). | This indicator has been explained further and set into the analytical context. See p. 13-14. |
| 6. There are no explicit research questions. | A research question has been formulated and is presented in the introduction. |
| 7. You should give us more details about how the questionnaire was developed and *around what questions the interviews were structured.* | The decision was made to disregard the quantitative part of the study and make it a purely qualitative study. This since the response rate of SBOs for the questionnaire was too low.  *A table has been put together, showing the interview questions with SBOs and municipal officials/politicians. (see p. 12).* |
| 8. In the ‘quantitative analysis’ section, you say that you apply univariate analysis. It is not clear on what data you do this descriptive analysis. | The decision was made to disregard the quantitative part of the study and make it a purely qualitative study. This since the response rate of SBOs for the questionnaire was too low. |
| 9. To me how you present us the findings is in contradiction with what you wish to highlight, i.e. state-society synergies. Right now, you provide us with an account of how SBO sees their relationship with authorities and then you do the other way around. This becomes too descriptive. Instead you should maybe structure the reporting of your findings along 2-3 themes that you have identified from the literature review and, for each of these themes, you could bring to the fore the way the views from the SBO and authorities are similar or different. | The results and findings have been re-written. The meanings, themes and patterns are then discussed in a following section. |
| 10. In your discussion, you should focus on future research and what you think could be done empirically and conceptually in order to better grasp this synergy between entrepreneurs and authorities. Maybe the contribution of the municipality is more as broker of such relations than steering local development per se. | In the section discussing meanings, themes and patterns there is also a discussion on future research (empirically and conceptually) |
| 11. The interesting thing in this study is that horizontal social capital seems to be strong, despite the fact that the link to the municipality (vertical social capital) is weak. Is this a characteristic of remote rural areas? See Young (2010). | A comment on generalization possibilities has been made. See p. 12. I hope this is what you were looking for, otherwise please let me know. |
| 12. Page 8: “The qualitative findings were followed up with a questionnaire (Yin 2014)” It is not clear for me why you use the reference to Yin at that particular point. Is he specifically addressing how to use questionnaire as a method for qualitative research? | This reference has been removed, since I realize it is unusable in this sentence.  Furthermore, the decision was made to keep this article solely qualitative. |