ACCELERATING REGIONS: HOW ACCELERATORS ADAPT TO INSTITUTIONAL, SOCIAL, AND SPATIAL CONTEXTS

Melissa Mae Cruz

Niaz Morshed Patwary

Lund University School of Economics and Management

Master's Program (2022-2023) in Entrepreneurship and Innovation Course: ENTN19 - Degree Project in New Venture Creation

Supervisor: Anna Brattström

Examiner: Ziad El-Awad

Abstract

Given the calls to examine accelerators across different regions and contexts, we ask the research question: *How do accelerators adapt to institutional, social, and spatial constraints of emerging and established ecosystems?* With this research question, we conduct qualitative research to understand how two different accelerators, one located in Skåne, Sweden and another located in Dhaka, Bangladesh, are affected and shaped by their contexts. These cases were deliberately selected to contrast the regional constraints stemming from established and emerging regions (Eisenhardt and Gaebner, 2007). To develop a broader and more nuanced understanding of how accelerators adapt to different regions, we triangulate our data with multiple stakeholders such as accelerator staff, advisors, and start-up founders. The results indicate that there are marked differences in adaptations of accelerators in emerging regions, especially in bridging institutional gaps. We also observed that common practices across both regions include promoting entrepreneurship culture and collaborating with ecosystem stakeholders. Finally, we present a working theory that can be used as a guide for future research on accelerators in emerging and established ecosystems.

Keywords: accelerators, regional context, Dhaka, Bangladesh, Skåne, Sweden, social, spatial, institutional, constraints, emerging ecosystems, emerging regions

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank our classmates who took the time to read our paper and contributed with their feedback through various seminars. We especially thank Dian and Ayesha for their thoughtful feedback.

We would also like to acknowledge the faculty at Sten. K Johnson Center for Entrepreneurship for their guidance. Particularly, we would like to thank Professor Anna Brattström, our supervisor who always provided the right guidance and feedback at the right time. We are thankful to Professor Diamanto Politis for her valuable feedback. We are thankful to the Program Director, Craig Mitchell, for supporting us throughout the program. We extend our sincere gratitude to the Swedish Institute and Lund Global Scholarship Committee for providing us with generous scholarship support to pursue the Masters program.

We would also like to thank Afsana, who provided us with moral support and constant encouragement while writing our thesis.

Finally, we would like to thank the informants who took part in this study, and were gracious enough to give us their precious time. Their candid and thoughtful responses allowed us to make the contribution therein.

Table of Contents

List of Tables and Figures

1. Introduction

Since the first accelerator was founded in 2005, accelerators have been hailed as important players in entrepreneurial ecosystems worldwide (Dahl, 2011). Local and national policymakers have viewed these programs as a way to promote economic development in under-resourced regions, and many studies show a positive correlation between accelerators and ecosystem-level outcomes (Bliemel et. al, 2019; Hochberg, 2016). However, many studies of accelerators are conducted in established regions such as the United States or Western Europe (Crisan et. al, 2019). Thus, accelerators that have cropped up in emerging ecosystems such as Bangladesh in efforts to replicate established regions may exhibit different outcomes.

Since many authors posit that accelerator outcomes are contingent on the availability of entrepreneurial resources such as knowledge and capital availability, there is a call for accelerator studies in a broader variety of regions and cultural contexts (Crisan et. al, 2019). Hallen, Cohen, and Bingham (2020), in particular, emphasize the importance of examining accelerators in different geographical regions, given that the model is inexpensive to replicate and is seen as a vehicle for economic development among regional policymakers due to their ability to attract investment.

To investigate this, we follow the lead from Welter's (2011) call to contextualize entrepreneurship by using a context lens to examine how accelerators must adapt to their respective institutional, social, and spatial constraints. Our goal was to create a substantive framework that will address the gaps in literature as mentioned by Hochberg (2016), Hallen, Cohen, and Bingham (2020), and Crisan et. al (2019) regarding the assessment of accelerators in different regions. To do this, we conducted a multi-case comparative study on two accelerators from one established and one emerging region: the Skåne region of Sweden and Greater Dhaka, Bangladesh, respectively. These cases were purposefully selected to contrast the regional constraints stemming from established and emerging regions (Eisenhardt and Gaebner, 2007). To develop a broader and more nuanced understanding of how accelerators adapt to different regions, each case was triangulated with multiple stakeholders such as accelerator staff, advisors, and start-up founders. (Rousseau & Fried, 2001; Bell, Bryman, and Harley; 2022).

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Accelerator Definition

Even among those well-versed in business, the concept of an accelerator is obscure and hard to distinguish from other forms of business support organizations such as incubators, pre-incubators, or corporate ventures. Indeed, even among scholars, there seems to be some disagreement on how an accelerator is defined. For example, studies define accelerators as a type of incubator (Jackson and Richter, 2017; Yang et. al, 2018). In contrast, many authors state that what separates accelerators from other business-support organizations is their fixed-term timeline and intensive training resulting in a "demo day", or a showcase of program graduates (Cohen and Hochberg, 2014; Crișan et al, 2019; Pauwels et. al, 2016). For our study, we used what seems to be the most widely agreed upon definition of accelerator in the literature, which Cohen et. al (2020) describes accelerators as "a fixed-term, cohort-based program for startups, including mentorship and/or educational components, that culminates in a graduation event" (Cohen et. al, 2020, p.1782).

The first accelerator, The Y-Combinator, was originally founded in 2005, and since then accelerator programs have become increasingly prominent in ecosystems worldwide and have garnered positive reputations among both policymakers and entrepreneurs. Just 9 years after the first accelerator was founded, there were estimated to be 3,000+ accelerators across the globe (Cohen & Hochberg, 2014). The business model revolves around investment at the early stage of the venture, creating an incentive for accelerator managers to utilize interventions such as entrepreneurial education, network building, and investment to affect startup success and influence perceptions of values for startup founder participants (Lange and Johnston, 2020).

2.2 The Importance of Accelerators

According to the Harvard Business Review, Kempner and Roberts (2015) mention that between 2005 and 2015, in the United States alone, over 5,000 startups joined over 172 accelerators. Altogether, these companies raised $19.5 billion in funding. Graduates of these programs raised further investment and were on average over $15 million in valuation leading up to a staggering $1 billion in valuation – achieving the highly-sought after 'unicorn' status (e.g. AirbnB, Stripes, Dropbox).

Because of their potential for impact, startup accelerators have been viewed as a way to promote economic development and build entrepreneurial clusters in emerging and established regions, and regional and national policymakers have made significant investments in the creation of accelerators to spur regional growth (Hochberg, 2016; Bliemel et. al, 2019). Thus, to better understand the impact of these investments, many studies have looked into the efficacy of accelerators at the ecosystem and organizational levels (Cohen & Hochberg, 2014; Cohen, Bingham, & Hallen, 2019; Crisan et. al, 2019).

For example, in their 2016 study, Hochberg finds that regions with an accelerator experience a 104 percent increase in the amount of seed and early-stage VC deals, and a 298 percent increase in the total dollar amount of seed and early-stage funding. On an organizational level, by comparing a matched sample of accepted and almost-accepted cohorts from top-tier programs such as Y-combinator, Hallen, Cohen, and Bingham (2020) conclude that accelerators increased the likelihood of participating startups reaching their objectives and also accelerated the pace of reaching those objectives. Another study shows that entrepreneurs also view accelerators and the services that they provide as helping them improve their firm's outcomes – so much so that they recommend other entrepreneurs to the program. (Lange and Johnston, 2020).

This ample evidence has spurred worldwide growth and investment in accelerators, but their efficacy across different contexts has been under-investigated. While there is generally positive consensus on accelerators' influence on startups and entrepreneurial ecosystems in academic literature, we reiterate that many of these studies are concentrated on established ecosystems in Western Europe or North America (Cohen, Bingham, & Hallen 2019; Hochberg, 2016; Lange & Johnston, 2020; Crisan et. al, 2019). These studies largely overshadow the studies on emerging ecosystems that do exist (Gonzalez-Uribe & Leatherbee, 2017; Goswami, Mitchell & Bhagavatula, 2018).

2.3 Why study context in entrepreneurship

Across organizational and entrepreneurship literature, there have been increasing appeals to recognize the role of context in understanding firm outcomes. In their 2001 editorial on contextualizing organizational research, Rousseau and Fried highlight the growing importance of context, especially as the domain of organizational research 'is becoming more international,

giving rise to challenges in transporting social science models from one society to another' (p.1). More specific to entrepreneurship literature, Welter (2011) underscores that contextualizing our view of entrepreneurship can help us understand "when, how, and why entrepreneurship happens" (p.176). For example, studies show that context can impact the success of entrepreneurs in emerging economies through, for example, institutions that constrict or enable entry into the market (Welter & Smallbone, 2011; Dutt et. al, 2016). Thus, understanding context is crucial in understanding the outcomes of both startups and accelerators across different regions.

2.4 Defining Context

Throughout our analysis, we use Welter's (2011) definition of context to guide our research. In her 2011 paper which explores different contexts of entrepreneurship, Welter defines context as "circumstances, conditions, situations, or environments" that "enable or constrain" the phenomenon it refers to (p.167). The author goes on to present a distinction between "omnibus contexts" and "discrete contexts" from Johns's 2006 paper that examines the impact of context on organizational behavior. "Omnibus context" can be understood as a broader lens of viewing context that includes a wide range of dimensions such as norms, policy, and location–helping to classify "where" dimensions for entrepreneurship. On the other hand, "discrete contexts" describe more specific situational variables that shape behavior, such as the strategies that individuals and organizations employ. Using these different contextual lenses can help frame entrepreneurship research by maintaining analyses on lower and higher levels—allowing researchers to observe, for instance, the interaction between geographical environments and business support infrastructure. To illustrate this, we have provided an adapted table from Welter's article *(See table 1).*

Dimensions Type of Context	**Omnibus**	**Discrete (examples)**
Institutional	Culture and Society	Societal attitudes and norms; Legal and Regulatory Regulations
Social	Networks	Structure of networks and density
Spatial	Geographical Environments, Countries and Regions; Industrial Districts and Clusters	Characteristics of physical accelerator location; Characteristics of local regions

Table 1. Adapted Table, Classifying 'Where Contexts for Entrepreneurship', (Welter, 2011)

Thus, in our data analysis, we have aimed to consider the role of context on the omnibus level, by drawing attention to "where" dimensions such as networks, geographical environments, and culture and society.

2.5 Types of Context

In the existing literature on entrepreneurship, studies tend to focus on how business contexts (i.e. the competitive landscape) affect entrepreneurs (Welter, 2011). For this reason, we utilize three alternative types of omnibus contexts in our research to compare how accelerators must adapt to contrasting social, spatial, and institutional constraints in emerging and established regions.

2.5.1 Institutional

Institutional context refers to both formal and informal institutions as rules that constrain or benefit entrepreneurship (North, 1991). According to Welter and Smallbone (2011), institutional context "influences the nature, pace of development, and extent of entrepreneurship as well as the way entrepreneurs behave" (p.108). Much research already exists on how formal institutions such as regulatory frameworks influence entrepreneurship (Davidsson, Hunter & Klofsten, 2006). Less often explored is how informal institutions, such as societal norms and attitudes, can influence the perception, and thus the prevalence of entrepreneurship throughout different countries and regions (Welter & Smallbone, 2011).

2.5.2 Social

The field of entrepreneurship research often examines social context through social networking or social contracting. This is because social context is an important factor for entrepreneurs when starting their business and overcoming liabilities of newness (Starr and MacMillan, 1990; Davidsson and Honig, 2003). Typically, entrepreneurs use social networking to secure the resources needed for their venture, such as access to markets, funding capital, and knowledge. It has been shown that the social context of a region can affect entrepreneurs' ability to network and secure these resources (Granovetter, 1985). A quantitative longitudinal study from Letaifa and Rabeau (2013) also shows that the connectedness of stakeholders in an industry can contribute to collaboration, increasing access to social networks in a region.

2.5.3 Spatial

Spatial factors are linked to the welfare of regions: countries can be located in advantageous locations, while other countries are located in regions which preclude access to key resources and international markets (Zahra, Wright, and Abdelgawad, 2014). The concept of spatial context can be difficult to tease apart from social and institutional contexts since the geography

of where entrepreneurship takes place has many implications on, for instance, societal norms and industrial linkages. For this reason, Thornton and Flynn (2003) define spatial context by designating the geographical limitations of communities that can be bounded by social norms and culture – we extend this definition to include regional ecosystems such as Sweden's Skåne region or Bangladesh's Dhaka region.

This means that spatial context can be characterized by the density of a region, which is thought to increase social assets such as trust and industry knowledge that benefit entrepreneurship (Scott, 1999). However, in the aforementioned longitudinal study from Letaifa and Rabeau (2013), the findings also show that close geographic proximity can be a barrier to the connectedness of ecosystem stakeholders and impede entrepreneurship and innovation (Letaifa and Rabeau, 2013). As such, the spatial context has strong implications on the social context of the region, as it has an effect on accelerators' ability to secure resources for their startups.

2.6 Established vs. Emerging Economies

Similar to the literature on accelerators, current research on entrepreneurial ecosystems has focused mostly on established economies in North America and Western Europe (Cao and Shi, 2021). However, because they stimulate economic development and regional growth (Stam and Van de Ven, 2019), global policymakers have invested in the development of these ecosystems to mitigate disparities between established and emerging economies. For this reason, scholars believe that entrepreneurship in emerging countries is a sorely understudied phenomenon (Cao and Shi, 2021).

Emerging economies are defined as "low-income, rapid-growth countries using economic liberalization as their primary engine of growth" (Hoskisson et al., 2000, p.249). In their systematic literature review of emerging and advanced economies, Cao and Shi (2021) outline three criteria which define an emerging ecosystem. They are:

- A lower level of economic development, mainly exhibited by Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita
- A higher growth potential, mainly exhibited by the GDP growth rate, and
- Fewer market-supporting institutions, negatively affecting the free-market system.

Based on this criteria, we have selected an accelerator from Dhaka to be featured in our study, as the case is located in the rapidly emerging country of Bangladesh (United Nations, 2021). We have also chosen an accelerator from Skåne, Sweden as a case to represent an established ecosystem, as Sweden is a high-income, developed country in Western Europe (United Nations, 2022). More reasoning regarding the selection of Bangladesh and Skåne as samples, as well as more information on the economic and regional characteristics are elaborated in our Methods chapter under "Sampling", section 3.2.

2.7 How Accelerators Adapt to Regional Context

Many authors contend that the regional context of accelerators is a critical component of their effectiveness due to the resources made available by local ecosystems (Crisan et. al, 2019). For example, in their study on the regional economic effects of accelerators, Hochberg (2016) concedes that the characteristics of different regions can affect the outcomes of accelerators, and recommends that future research consider how regional characteristics such as culture can increase entrepreneurial outcomes. The aforementioned study on the program design of accelerators by Hallen, Cohen, and Bingham (2019) suggests that future research explores the relationship between accelerators' efficacy and the richness of entrepreneurial knowledge and resources in diverse ecosystems, as the accelerator form is being replicated in ecosystems around the world (Hallen Cohen and Bingham, 2019). But despite these calls, studies have not yet explored how the regional context of accelerators affects their efficacy.

While no existing literature on accelerators has examined the regional context's effects on these organizations, there is evidence to suggest that context does indeed have an effect. In their qualitative study of U.S. university incubators, Amezcua et. al (2013) demonstrates that outcomes for business-support organizations (such as accelerators) are dependent on whether services meet organizational needs associated with particular environmental pressures at founding. Additionally, in their study of Silicon Valley and Berlin-based founders, Scheidgen and Brattström (2022) show that social context matters when implementing "warm or cold" networking strategies to acquire resources for their startup through networking.

2.8 Concluding Remarks

Given the calls to examine accelerators across different regions and contexts (Crisan et. al,

2019; Hochberg 2016; Hallen, Cohen, and Bingham, 2019), as well as Welter's (2011) call to contextualize entrepreneurship, we ask the research question: *How do accelerators adapt to institutional, social, and spatial constraints of emerging and established ecosystems?* With this research question, we seek to reflect on how the outcomes of two different accelerators, one located in Skåne, Sweden and another located in Dhaka, Bangladesh, are affected and shaped by their context. Our purpose is to develop a substantive theory that can be transferred to future studies examining how regional constraints affect accelerator programs in emerging and established ecosystems. We also seek to contribute to the literature on accelerators through an abductive investigation of their efficacy in emerging regions.

3. Methods

3.1 Research Design

Given the gaps in the literature on how accelerators adapt to regional contexts (Crisan et. al, 2019; Hochberg, 2016), we adopted an abductive, grounded theory approach to explore our research question and inform our research design. Specifically, we implemented the Gioia methodology (Gioia et. al, 2012; Magnani & Gioia, 2022) to conduct our study. Through this methodology, we conducted a preliminary review of the literature on accelerators and identified an initial research question. As we conducted semi-structured interviews, we met to discuss new findings, and adjusted our interview protocol and research as new information arose from informant responses. As recommended by Gioia et. al (2012), we did not approach the research design using a rigorous theoretical framework.

Initially, our intention for the study was to study how entrepreneurship culture manifested in accelerators and the extent of its effect on startups. However, in creating our interview protocol and shaping our outreach language, we strived to use neutral language and formulated our questions broadly so as to allow informants to express themselves as "knowledgeable experts" on how entrepreneurship culture fit into the interrelated factors that affected startup success (Gioia, 2012, pg. 17).

Thus, our early questions focused on what entrepreneurial culture would look or feel like in an accelerator, through questions that examine the "mindset" or qualities of startups selected, as well as staff attributes. Drawing from Hochberg's (2016) call to examine the effectiveness of programs in new regions in light of differing regional characteristics (i.e. industry composition and culture), we also asked questions regarding startup founders' and external stakeholders' opinions on "the role of accelerators", "whether they believe accelerators are achieving their goals", and "how regional resources affect outcomes for startups and accelerators".

Through our early interviews, we found that entrepreneurship culture was part of a more complex array of factors that affected startup outcomes in both our Bangladeshi and Swedish cases. For example, our informants stressed that, while the prevalence of a societal entrepreneurial culture is important, regional investment and the geographical location of the ecosystem were also critical factors that shaped how accelerators affected startups. Thus, through the emergence of this new data and subsequent data analysis, we developed the current research question that focuses on how accelerators adapt to regional contexts.

3.2 Sampling

Steyaert and Katz state that "the true measure of entrepreneurship in a society as a whole needs to sample across multiple sectors, domains, and spaces" (2004, p.193). In our efforts to better understand accelerators in emerging contexts, our selection of two different geographical contexts has allowed us to adopt a "multi-context perspective" (Welter, 2011).

By incorporating the contexts of differing regions, we can observe how context shapes accelerators' decisions to implement adaptation strategies. Furthermore, to understand the challenges that are unique to emerging ecosystems, we elected to include one accelerator from an emerging entrepreneurial ecosystem, and one from an established ecosystem (Cao and Shi, 2021). We consider these cases as "polar types", a sampling approach that allows us to more easily observe the contrasting patterns in the data, allowing us to observe "very clear pattern recognition of the central constructs, relationships, and logic" of accelerators in emerging contexts (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007, p.27). Thus, we selected two accelerators in

Bangladesh and Sweden. A description of these regions and their national context are detailed below.

3.2.1 Regional Characteristics

Dhaka, Bangladesh

Situated in South Asia, Bangladesh is the eighth most populous country in the world, with 165 million people. Despite its huge population, it is approximately one third of Sweden's geographical area. As per the International Monetary Fund, it currently has a low GDP per capita of less than $2500 (International Monetary Fund, 2022). The World Bank classifies Bangladesh as a lower-middle income country (World Bank, 2022a) though it has enjoyed consistent annual GDP growth of more than six percent over the past decade (World Bank, 2022b). It has been projected as a top 30 global economy in 2030 for GDP projections measured at market exchange rates by PwC (PwC, 2017). Keeping these statistics in mind, we identified Bangladesh as a fitting representative of an emerging economy fulfilling the aforementioned criteria from Cao and Shi (2021): lower economic development, a higher growth potential, and fewer market-supporting institutions.

Given its role as a capital region and national startup hub, founders from throughout Bangladesh travel to Dhaka region to seek the network, knowledge, and funding resources needed to grow their businesses, according to our informants. As seen from the detailed 2021-2022 Bangladesh Ecosystem Mapping Report commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme, it is strikingly evident how Dhaka is the center of the startup ecosystem of Bangladesh (LightCastle Analytics, 2022). It is supported by a fledgling founders' community with support from investors, accelerators and stakeholders in an endeavor to build the nascent startup infrastructure. It is also geographically adjacent to India, situated close by to higher-resourced ecosystems of Delhi and Bangalore.

Skåne, Sweden

On the other hand, we have selected the highly developed nation, Sweden, as a representative of an established economy. Sweden is listed as a "high-income" economy by the World Bank (World Bank, 2022a), given that the GDP per capita is over $55,000 as per International

Monetary Fund (IMF, 2022). We selected the Skåne region from Sweden as the representative region of an established economy for our study. According to a 2012 OECD regional report, "Skåne has successfully fostered integrated regional public investment through a regional development approach mobilizing all regional stakeholders…it has created an important basis on which to mobilize resources available through other, central or municipal, channels" (OECD, 2012). The report also mentions that Skåne is an example of Sweden's regionalization process of maximizing the country's growth potential. Skåne is also a thriving startup ecosystem with multiple accelerators supporting numerous successful startups. Despite its small size, the region itself is a growing hub for innovation (OECD, 2012), situated close to multiple prestigious ecosystems such as Copenhagen, Gothenburg, and Stockholm.

3.2.2 Accelerator Characteristics

After we selected the countries and the regions, we selected one accelerator from each region. The first accelerator is a corporate accelerator located in Dhaka. The second accelerator is a government-run accelerator located in the diverse and multinational region of Skåne.

Despite their differences in locations, these accelerators exhibit a few important similarities that allow for increased reliability between cases and increased external validity of our findings (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2022). For example, both organizations are highly selective (1-2% acceptance rate) and serve high-growth, high-technology startups, meaning that core programming should be similar across organizations. They both offer many similar benefits to participants (mentorship, legal help offering, demo day graduation, etc). They are both located in the main cities of their respective provinces (i.e. Dhaka City as part of Dhaka Division, Bangladesh and Malmö as part of Skåne province, Sweden). Yet, from a larger regional perspective these regions are both described as "underdogs" by their informants, by virtue of being in close proximity to world-renowned entrepreneurial ecosystems. Finally, they have both been in operation since 2015, are currently active accelerators, are cohort-based, and have similar portfolio sizes with comparable survival rate for portfolio startups. A comparison of the cases, composed of information from interviews and informants' websites can be seen in Table 2.

Criteria	Dhaka Accelerator	Skåne Accelerator
Accelerator Type	Corporate accelerator	Government accelerator
Startup Portfolio Type	High-growth	High-growth
Sector-wise Focus	Exclusively tech startups	Exclusively tech startups
Headquarter	Dhaka city	Malmö city
Ecosystem Stage	Emerging ecosystem	Established ecosystem
Funding Stages Round	Pre-seed, Seed, Post-seed	Seed, Post-Seed
Competing/Neighboring Ecosystems	Bangalore, India; New Delhi, India; Singapore City, Singapore	Copenhagen, Denmark; Gothenburg, Sweden; Stockholm, Sweden
Cohort Based	Yes	Yes
Yearly In-take frequency	Once a year	Once a year
Average Acceptance Rate	1-2%	1-2%
Offered Mentorship Period	3-6 months	3 months
Initial Offering	$15,000	$50,000
Accelerator Ownership	4%	2%
Startup Survival Rate	70%	80%
Venture Location	On-site	On-site
Legal Advisory Offering	Yes	Yes
Operating Status	Active	Active
Established Year	2015	2015
Number of Startups in Portfolio	44	45

Table 2. Comparison of Cases

3.2.3 Informant Characteristics

Responding to calls from Crisan et. al (2019) for more nuanced and inclusive analyses of accelerators, we triangulated our interviews with accelerator managers with data from external advisors and startup founders (*see Table 3*). This has allowed us to develop a more holistic and unbiased view of accelerators' effectiveness on startups and how they adapt to local challenges in the region.

Region	Pseudonym	Role	Interview Length
Dhaka, Bangladesh	Monzur Morshed (male respondent)	Accelerator Manager	1 hr 15 min
	Khaled Karim (male respondent)	Accelerator Manager	58 min
	Ashraful Alam (male respondent)	Accelerator Manager	50 min
	Muntasir Munir (male respondent)	External Advisor	36 min
	Mahmudul Hasan (male respondent)	External Advisor	54 min
	Naeem Imran (male respondent)	Startup Founder	1 hr 2 min
	Imtiaz Choudhury (male respondent)	Startup Founder	58 min
	Papan Chakma (male respondent)	Startup Founder	31 min
	Rajib Imteaz (male respondent)	Startup Founder	1 hr 3 min
	Tapojit Kumar (male respondent)	Startup Founder	1hr 5min
	Ashiq Tamzid (male respondent)	Startup Founder	56 min
Skåne, Sweden	John Barnes (male respondent)	External Advisor	1 hr 1 min
	Jurgen Klopp (male respondent)	External Advisor	51 min
	Linnea Larsson (female respondent)	External Advisor	51 min
	Molly Berg (female respondent)	External Advisor	29 min
	Steven Gerrard (male respondent)	Startup Founder	42 min
	Astrid Wallin (female respondent)	External Advisor	56 min
	Leia Organa (female respondent)	External Advisor	1 hr 7 min
	Neil Nilsson (male respondent)	Accelerator Manager	30 min
	Gemma Hanson (female respondent)	External Advisor	45 min

Table 3. Overview of interviewees with randomized pseudonyms

3.3 Data Analysis

We conducted a total of 20 interviews, with 11 interviews from Dhaka, Bangladesh and 9 interviews from Skåne, Sweden. After transcribing 17.5 hours of recorded interviews, we extracted quotes from each informant and coded these responses into first-order codes. During the extraction and coding, we strived to maintain a "multi-context perspective" (Welter, 2011) to ensure we were cognizant of the different constraints that accelerators must adapt to. We also ensured to maintain the integrity of informants by adhering to informant-centric terms. After an initial round of coding, we met to discuss and discard any codes that were not relevant to our research. As a result, we identified 66 first-order codes that captured our main research question "how accelerators adapt to regional context". To gain a better understanding of the larger regional context for our informants, we also identified first-order codes related to the "environmental pressures that influence business outcomes", "factors that influence accelerator efficacy" and "accelerator interventions". In total, we identified over 280 first-order codes.

After our initial analysis, we then organized our first-order codes into second-order themes that reflected theory in the literature on contextualizing entrepreneurship (Welter, 2011; Amezcua et. al, 2013) and accelerators (Hochberg, 2016; Crisan et. al, 2019; Hallen, Cohen, and Bingham, 2019). For example, we highlighted 2nd-order themes that related to the societal and cultural understanding of entrepreneurship, as well as legal and regulatory frameworks that accelerators were adapting to (Welter, 2011). Related to our main research question, we identified 11 second-order themes that examined how our cases adapted to their respective contexts. We further aggregated these into three dimensions: *institutional constraints, social constraints, and spatial constraints.* Finally, we organized the data structure into two tables representing both the Dhaka accelerator (*see figure 1*) and Skåne accelerator (*see figure 2*). After establishing the data structure, we further consulted the literature on contextualizing entrepreneurship (Welter, 2011) and emerging versus established ecosystems (Cao and Shi, 2021) to incorporate additional meaning and theoretical insights into our findings (Gioia et. al, 2012).

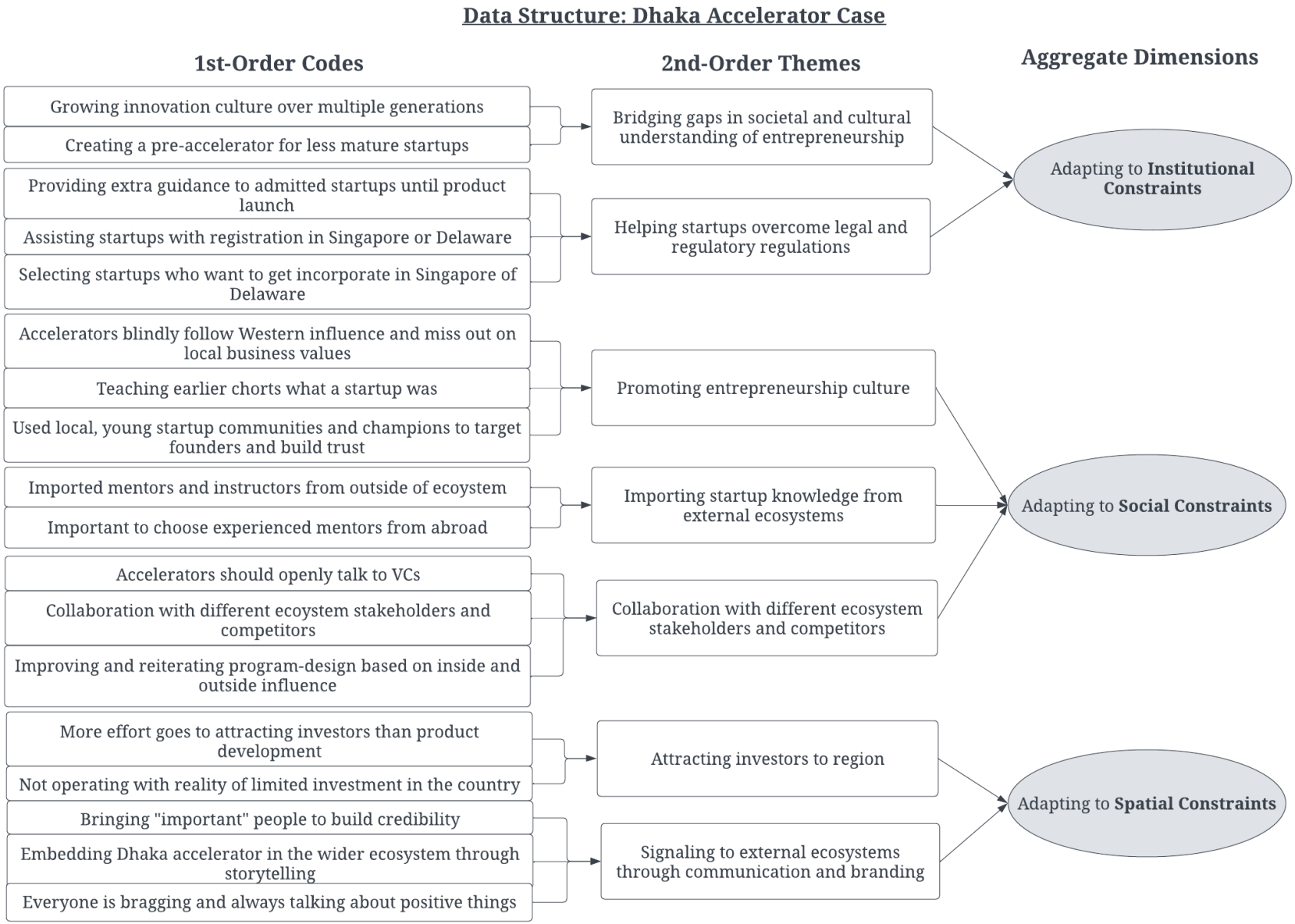

Figure 1. Data Structure, Dhaka Accelerator Case

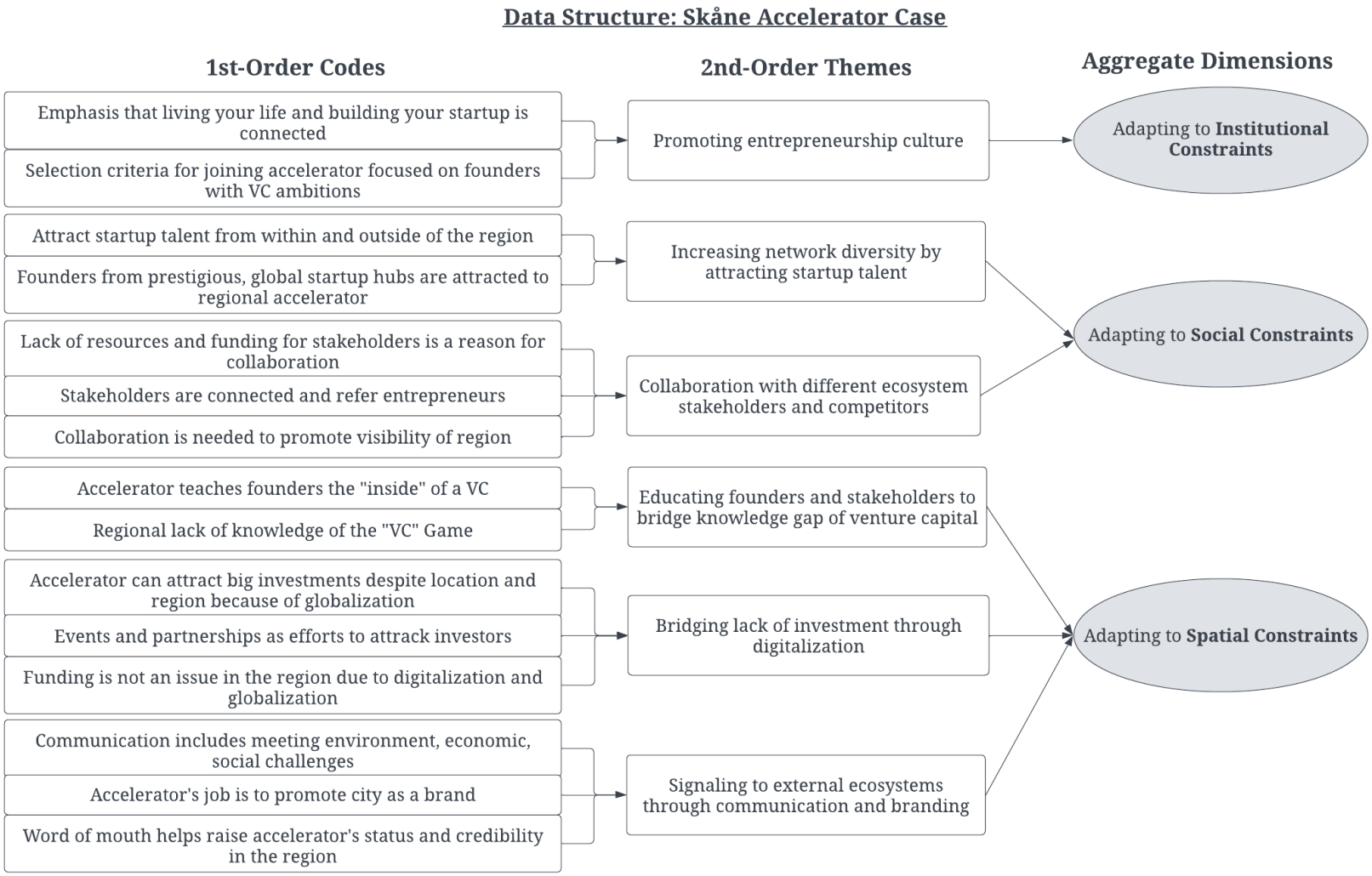

Figure 2. Data Structure, Skåne Accelerator Case

4. Findings

In the following sections, we present our findings from semi-structured interviews with accelerator managers, external advisors, and startup founders in Dhaka and Skåne on how accelerators adapt to regional constraints. To show the importance of context in accelerator organizations, we organize our findings by outlining this section with **differences** (section 4.1) and **similarities** (section 4.2) between our contrasting cases. We have not included a list of contextual factors in our findings, and instead focus on showcasing adaptation strategies. For a full list of regional constraints and enablers by region, see *Appendix D* and *Appendix E*.

4.1 Differences between Accelerators from Emerging and Established Regions

Through our comparison of accelerators in the Dhaka and Skåne regions, we have attempted to understand how accelerators adapt to different regional contexts. As we expected, the unique confluence of institutional, social, and spatial factors of each region contributed to differences in how accelerators adapted their goals and secured resources for their founders. For example, Dhaka Accelerator was subject to more unique institutional constraints due to the emerging nature of the regional startup ecosystem (*see table 4 and table 5)*. The following section will highlight the adaptation strategies and regional factors for these differences in efforts to underscore the importance of contextual factors in these regions.

Unique Adaptations, Dhaka Case

Aggregate Dimensions	**1st-Order Codes**
Adapting to Institutional Constraints	Bridging gaps in societal and understanding of entrepreneurship
	Helping startups overcome legal and regulatory regulations
Adapting to Social Constraints	Importing mentors and startup knowledge from external ecosystems
Adapting to Spatial Constraints	Attracting investors to region

Table 4. Unique adaptations of Dhaka Accelerator

Unique Adaptations, Skåne Case

Aggregate Dimensions	**1st-Order Codes**
Adapting to Social Constraints	Increasing network diversity by attracting startup talent
Adapting to Spatial Constraints	Bridging lack of investment through digitalization
	Educating founders and stakeholders to bridge knowledge gap of venture capital

Table 5. Unique adaptations of Skåne Accelerator

4.1.1 Greater Institutional Constraints for Dhaka

Interestingly, in comparing each region, it seemed that our informants from Dhaka emphasized greater efforts to adapt to institutional constraints than those from Skåne. These included adaptations to *formal* institutional constraints, such as *helping startups overcome legal and regulatory regulations,* that affected the ease of business in the region. Dhaka Accelerator also needed to adapt to *informal* institutional constraints that affected the readiness and supply of founders in the region (*bridging gaps in societal and cultural understanding of entrepreneurship*). For example, the creation of a "*pre-accelerator program"* was created to remedy the lack of understanding of entrepreneurship and the resulting lack of founder readiness (Khaled Karim, Accelerator Manager).

Representative Quotes of Unique Institutional Adaptations

2nd-Order Themes	Representative Quotes
Bridging Gaps in Societal and Cultural Understanding of Entrepreneurship (Dhaka)	*"The startups here, they have evolved over time. The first generation, they tried to copy a lot of things, including the idea itself from whatever is successful elsewhere. The second generation didn't have to do that. They were looking into doing something more innovative, creative, and locally relevant" (Khaled Karim, Accelerator Manager, Dhaka).* *"...oftentimes, we had to create pre-accelerator programs, or we had to dedicate the first couple of weeks to help founders catch up with simple, you know, basic concepts"(Khaled Karim, Accelerator Manager, Dhaka).* *"If a country's ecosystem doesn't understand the startups, then the banks and investors are not ready to invest in the startups" (Ashiq Tamzid, Startup Founder, Dhaka).*

Helping startups overcome legal and regulatory regulations (Dhaka)	*"So the very first support they get is--we worked with quite a few legal firms, they will send their lawyers and these guys will have a, almost like a mentoring session one to one and a conference style mentoring, where the lawyers take them through the entire company formation process...they were also thinking whether to incorporate the company in the country or in Singapore, or in Delaware, other places" (Monzur Morshed, Accelerator Manager, Dhaka).* *"we pitched the seventh cohort to a more mature set of companies that are looking to raise investments, particularly from outside of Bangladesh, who were looking to also get incorporated in either Delaware or Singapore" (Khaled Karim, Accelerator Manager, Dhaka).*

Table 6. Representative Quotes for Second Order Themes, Institutional Differences

In contrast, these constraints are distinct from the Skåne ecosystem, where there was less emphasis on institutional constraints affecting accelerators and startups in the region. In fact, Steven Gerrard, a cofounder enrolled in the Skåne accelerator, named the affordability and the governmental support for startups in the region as key reasons why he preferred to do business there: *"I think it's a great region for startups, and especially because it is so affordable to live here compared to so many other places that have a lot of startup culture like Stockholm, and even Berlin is getting quite expensive and so on. And Malmö, honestly, I think it's very, very affordable".*

Bridging gaps in societal and cultural understanding of entrepreneurship

Across Dhaka-based accelerator managers, startup founders, and external advisors, informants emphasized that a regional constraint was the availability of tested ideas and experienced founders due to a nascent understanding of entrepreneurship culture in Bangladeshi society. This affected the accelerator's ability to select higher-quality startup participants since the pool of experienced founders is smaller than in higher-resourced regions: "*I would say that the supply is very constrained. So, in cases of maybe in the USA, or Europe (they are) admissible and the rest are not actually up to the mark. So that is where the supply is constrained is something that I wanted to mention … or even in India, if you start a startup accelerator and you have slots for 10 teams, you get 100 Good teams. So in Bangladesh, if–at least when we started–if you start with a slot for 10 teams, you get eight good teams, and then 12 that are so-so"* (Rajib Imteaz, Startup Founder).

This lack of understanding affected more than just the supply of entrepreneurial talent. Ashiq Tamzid, a successful startup founder that was part of an early batch of Dhaka Startup readily admitted that the lack of understanding of startups resulted in limited local investment: *"If a country's ecosystem doesn't understand the startups, then the banks and investors are not ready to invest in the startups"* he goes on to say that *"only 30 percent of [investments are] from the local market and 70 percent is foreign investment".* Some examples of how accelerators adapted to this institutional constraint were by *growing innovation over successive cohorts*, *setting up pre-accelerator cohorts*, and *"hand-holding"* (Khaled Karim, Accelerator Manager) admitted startups until they had launched their product.

Khaled Karim, an experienced manager at Dhaka Accelerator who has been involved since its inception, emphasized how cohort innovation has grown over successive cohorts. *"The startups here, they have evolved over time. The first generation, they tried to copy a lot of things, including the idea itself from whatever is successful elsewhere. The second generation didn't have to do that. They were looking into doing something more innovative, creative, and locally relevant."* He elaborated on how latter generations of startup founders were already adapting to the local market conditions rather than just replicating business models. It seemed that as Dhaka accelerator cultivated the innovation level of each cohort, startup founders began to bridge the gaps in societal and cultural understanding of entrepreneurship. He rounded off the discussion by saying, *"...the third generation, they're not only solving a unique problem for Bangladesh, some of them are also solving for the world"* (Khaled Karim).

Khaled Karim continued to illustrate how Dhaka Accelerator bridged the lack of understanding of entrepreneurship in the region: *"...oftentimes, we had to create pre-accelerator programs, or we had to dedicate the first couple of weeks to help founders catch up with simple, you know, basic concepts".* Tapojit Kumar, a startup founder from Dhaka Accelerator's pre-accelerator program, recounts how, after being rejected from a competing accelerator, he was accepted for a pre-accelerator program at Dhaka: *"they took the interview for all the startups [for the regular accelerator]. And they picked a few small startups who had the potential but might not have the infrastructure to be in an accelerator. So they put us up in a pre-accelerator."* The creation of a pre-accelerator demonstrates how Dhaka Accelerators used a conscious approach to inculcate

startup founders and better prepare them for their future; thus addressing the shortcomings in their understanding of the entrepreneurial approach.

As we conducted interviews, we discovered further how key stakeholders in Dhaka Accelerator were putting a concerted effort to remedy societal and cultural gaps in understanding of entrepreneurship. In our interview with Monzur Morshed, a founding manager who spearheaded Dhaka Accelerator at a time when accelerators and entrepreneurial culture were not well-known, he recounted the early days of designing the program and recalled *"At that point in time, even the concept of equity, stake equity, these were not very familiar; design thinking was not familiar,..... our principle was, we'll bring them in, we will train them, but at the same time, we will do almost hand holding until the time they have launched their product, got their traction in the market, and then we will graduate them on demo day".* Dhaka accelerator, as it appeared from Monzur Morshed's attestation, was providing tailored guidance to startup founders and complemented their programs with more foundational training.

Helping startups overcome legal and regulatory regulations

Across our Dhaka-based startup founders, external advisors, and accelerator managers, informants emphasized just how difficult it was to start a business in the region due to legal and regulatory complexities. For example, many startup informants claimed that they had to visit "10 or 15 offices" (Ashiq Tamzid, startup founder) just to incorporate their businesses. Additionally, accelerator managers and startup informants divulged that many investors preferred to invest in companies in Singapore and Delaware due to the ease of doing business.

One accelerator manager expounded that, due to its complex nature, working out the legalities of starting a corporation was one of the first services they offered to startups in their accelerators: "*So the very first support they get is—we worked with quite a few legal firms, they will send their lawyers and these guys will have a, almost like a mentoring session, one to one and conference style mentoring, where the lawyers take them through the entire company formation process...they were also thinking whether to incorporate the company in the country or in Singapore, or in Delaware, other places"* (Monzur Morshed, Accelerator Manager).

In efforts to further adapt to these legal constraints, the accelerator started to focus on later-stage companies, seeking to select startups that were looking for investments: *"we pitched the seventh cohort to a more mature set of companies that are looking to raise investments, particularly from outside of Bangladesh, who were looking to also get incorporated in either Delaware or Singapore"* (Khaled Karim, Accelerator Manager).

4.1.2 A Difference in Social Constraints: Importing Startup Knowledge vs. Increasing Network Diversity

Both cases employed strategies to adapt to limited entrepreneurial talent and knowledge in their respective regions. In the Dhaka region, accelerator managers made concerted efforts to *import startup knowledge from external ecosystems*. In the Skåne region, accelerators structured selection and programming to *increase network diversity by attracting talent from external ecosystems.* Given the abundant startup resources that the Skåne region has, Skåne accelerator's strategy to diversify the regional social context was to include global startups in their program and having them add "spice" to the region (Neil Nilsson, accelerator manager). On the other hand, because of the nascent stage of its ecosystem, Dhaka accelerator made concerted efforts to bring foundational startup knowledge into the ecosystem, often contracting and using its corporate resources to bring mentors from outside of the country (Khaled Karim, accelerator manager).

Representative Quotes of Unique Social Adaptations

2nd-Order Themes	Representative Quotes
Importing mentors and startup knowledge from external ecosystems (Dhaka)	"*...We ensured that for each of the topics, no matter from the start to the end, we approached the highly recommended instructors, even if they were out of the country, and we brought them in. So most of our expenditure was also to ensure that course curricula and the conductor's and mentors are the best in their fields. And that's how we're famous--from people who graduated from the program, word got out" (Monzur Morshed, Accelerator Manager, Dhaka).* *"The resident mentors...They're respected individuals, and they have built good family businesses and have worked with corporates. But I think they themselves didn't have the experience of building startups from the ground up with nothing. with having no money…So they were coming from their own perspective, they could not actually empathize with the startups because they know things in only theory."(Naeem Imran, Startup Founder, Dhaka).*
Increasing network diversity by	*"We want the startup community in Malmö to thrive and get some spice from*

attracting talent from external ecosystems (Skåne)	*all around Europe, the best talent to come here to experience Malmö at least for three, four months" (Neil Nilsson, Accelerator Manager, Skåne).* *"...people who are ambitious enough to build something huge…who are these people who want to do, live this life, you know, there's uncertainty and this drive to, you know, be this obsessed with an idea to build something huge" (Neil Nilsson, Accelerator Manager, Skåne).*

Table 7. Representative Quotes for Second Order Themes, Social Differences

Importing mentors and startup knowledge from external ecosystems

Dhaka accelerator managers, startup founders, and external advisors acknowledged that the prevalence of entrepreneurial talent and knowledge available in the region is still quite nascent. For this reason, accelerator managers adapted to this by ensuring that they hired talent from outside of the ecosystem when needed. As one manager explicitly said: *"...We ensured that for each of the topics, no matter from the start to the end, we approached the highly recommended instructors, even if they were out of the country, and we brought them in. So most of our expenditure was also to ensure that course curricula and the conductor's and mentors are the best in their fields. And that's how we're famous--from people who graduated from the program, word got out".*

However, Ashiq Tamzid, a startup founder from an earlier cohort, expressed disappointment at the level of adaptation. He strongly felt that many of the teachings were not applicable to the local market. Certain times, according to him, the business advice was out of place and time with advisors not using the correct frame of reference. He summarized, *"the resources [mentors] that we got, they are not very highly experienced. Based on their ability, they did the best, but they are not very much experienced to run the accelerator".*

Another startup founder who joined in an early cohort of Dhaka Accelerator also expressed a need to bring in more experienced mentors who have real-life experience of founding a startup: *"The resident mentors are well-respected individuals, and they have built good family businesses and have worked with corporates. But I think they themselves didn't have the experience of building startups from the ground up with nothing, with having no money. Very low resources,*

they themselves didn't have that experience. So that is something that I think was also a very important missing part of the puzzle" (Rajib Imteaz).

Increasing network diversity by attracting talent from external ecosystems

In contrast, accelerator managers and external advisors from the Skåne ecosystem emphasized the accelerator's strategies to grow regional innovation by adding *"spice",* or diversifying the entrepreneurial talent in the region. One accelerator manager we interviewed asserted: *"we want the startup community in Malmö to thrive and get some spice from all around Europe, the best talent to come here to experience Malmö at least for three, four months".*

We found that Skåne Accelerator was looking for more than just startup talent, however, they were looking for a particular mindset and lifestyle. According to accelerator manager Neil Nilsson part of the accelerator's challenges included finding *"people who are ambitious enough to build something huge…who are these people who want to do, live this life, you know, there's uncertainty and this drive to to, you know, be this obsessed with an idea to build something huge".* When we further pressed Neil Nilsson about the availability of founders in the region, he divulged that, while certainly these types of people exist in the region, there could be more done to activate this talent: *"you have a pretty comfortable life here. You know, like, and, I think we have these people, but, we could do more".* He confirmed that this is partly why Skåne Accelerator attracts talent from all over Europe.

4.1.3 Differences in Spatial Constraints

In regards to spatial constraints, we found that most respondents emphasized a lack of funding across both the Dhaka and Skåne regions. As both Dhaka and Skåne regions are located in close proximity to world-renowned ecosystems (i.e. Bangalore and Delhi in India, and Copenhagen and Stockholm in Scandinavia), informants from both regions emphasized that securing investors from abroad can often be challenging. Due to the differences in resources between each region, however, our informants detailed different strategies for bridging this spatial constraint. For example, Muntasir Munir, an external advisor of Dhaka accelerator, emphasized that a large part of Dhaka accelerator's role included not just product development, but *attracting investors to the region.*

Representative Quotes of Unique Spatial Adaptations

2nd-Order Themes	**Representative Quotes**
Attracting Investors to the Region (Dhaka)	*"That is why we focus so much on investment. And so if you look at an accelerator in the US, they would focus a lot more on product development, right? … they know the investor is going to come at the demo day–Y Combinator knows that right? But for us, investment is such a big piece, right? Because I mean, without that it doesn't matter if you have a product or not, because you won't be able to sell it right? So that's why I think we have a larger amount of effort gone towards investment in less than a typical extra role in a more developed market" (Muntasir Munir, External Advisor, Dhaka).*
Educating founders and stakeholders to bridge knowledge gap of venture capital (Skåne)	*"Understanding the VC game is what we're lacking in the region. We have too many entrepreneurs, people working with startups and investors … that maybe needing some education and understanding of how it works" (Neil Nilsson, Accelerator Manager, Skåne).* *"...you need to know the other side, and the inside of a VC fund…what's required, what already needs to be able to raise money from them? That's the gap we're bridging with our accelerator" (Neil Nilsson, Accelerator Manager, Skåne).*
Bridging lack of investment through digitalization and globalization (Skåne)	*"But then on the other hand, I mean, again, we're like in an international world and digital, globalized world. And we could of course, also get a VC from Berlin, or Stockholm, or maybe not that easily from California. But so in that sense, I don't really see much, much with [funding] as an issue specifically in this region." (Steven Gerrard, Startup Founder, Skåne)*

Table 8. Representative Quotes for Second Order Themes, Spatial Differences

In contrast, some informants from the Skåne accelerator did not see the availability of funds and the regions' proximity to higher-resourced regions as a barrier to funding. Rather, they emphasized that the innovation of the startups that were selected, the increasingly global nature of our world, and the increasing digital nature of work all helped *bridge the lack of investment in the region through digitalization and globalization.* For example, by attracting startup founders in the region through their global program, they raise the accelerators brand, and attract funding to the municipality that it is located in. Instead, Neil Nilsson, an accelerator manager at Skåne accelerator, emphasized the importance of *educating founders and stakeholders to bridge the knowledge gap of venture capital* in the Skåne region.

Attracting Investors to the Region

For Dhaka Accelerator, across external advisors, startup founders, and accelerator managers, most informants identified lack of investment as a constraint of the region. Muntasir Munir, one external advisor for Dhaka Accelerator, brought in an obvious comparison with benchmark accelerators such as Y-combinator. It is a common practice in established accelerators in the West to put the spotlight on product development, whereas, in the accelerator in Dhaka, a disproportionately large amount of attention is concentrated on raising investment. Our informants posited that no matter how great the product is, startups will not gain momentum without investment for the next round. Muntasir Munir provided clarification *"That is why we focus so much on investment. And so if you look at an accelerator in the US, they would focus a lot more on product development, right? Bigger product, really making it good to invest in r&d, and they know the investor is going to come at the demo day, Y Combinator knows that right? But for us, investment is such a big piece, right? Because I mean, without that it doesn't matter if you have a product or not, because you won't be able to sell it right? So that's why I think we have a larger amount of effort gone towards investment in less than a typical extra role in a more developed market".*

Educating founders and stakeholders to bridge knowledge gap of venture capital

In our interview with Neil Nilsson, the manager was surprisingly forthright in pointing out that different stakeholders in the region lacked the knowledge of how venture capital financing works for startups. *"Understanding the VC game is what we're lacking in the region. We have too many*

entrepreneurs, people working with startups and investors…that we may be needing some education and understanding of how it works". He goes on to state, *"...you need to know the other side, and the inside of a VC fund...what's required, what already needs to be able to raise money from them? That's the gap we're bridging with our accelerator"* (Neil Nilsson, Accelerator Manager).

Jurgen Klopp, an external advisor and Skåne ecosystem expert corroborated the need for more VC knowledge in the region. He discussed at length how *"second time founders, experienced founders, are succeeding in way different degrees than the first time founders do"* since first-time founders lack knowledge of venture capital. He concludes that for this reason, "*..accelerators and incubators here [in this region] are good for first time founders that don't have enough social capital or knowledge or network".*

Bridging lack of investment through digitalization and globalization

While external advisors identified lack of investment as a constraint of the region, startups and accelerator managers from the Skåne ecosystem stressed on how they were bridging lack of investment in the region through digitalization and globalization strategies. For example, the accelerator's strategy to select startups outside of the region allowed the accelerator to secure investments from investors outside of the region: *"attracting people to experience Malmö…some of them just go out and rave about Malmö and our startup community in Europe. And that leads us to the next investment…it's a compounding growth loop"* (Neil Nilsson, Accelerator Manager). Instead, the informant emphasized that lack of understanding of Venture Capital knowledge was the true issue regarding investment in the region as explained by section 4.2.1 on promoting entrepreneurship culture.

One startup founder who was part of the accelerator corroborated this trend, denying that the lack of funding was an issue while weighing the pros and cons of doing business in the region*: "But then on the other hand, I mean, again, we're like in an international world and digital, globalized world. And we could of course, also get a VC from Berlin, or Stockholm, or maybe not that easily from California. But so in that sense, I don't really see much, much with [funding] as an issue specifically in this region"* (Steven Gerrard, Startup Founder).

4.2 Similarities between Accelerators from Emerging and Established Regions

Interestingly, we also observed similar adaptation strategies across our differing cases. In this section, we describe the shared institutional, social, and spatial adaptations that both Skåne accelerator and Dhaka accelerator used to deal with their respective regional constraints. These include *promoting entrepreneurship culture, collaboration with different ecosystem stakeholders and competitors,* and *signaling to other ecosystem stakeholders.* The list of adaptations can be viewed in table 9.

Shared Adaptations Between Skåne and Dhaka Cases

Aggregate Dimensions	**2nd-Order Themes**
Adapting to Institutional Constraints	Promoting Entrepreneurship Culture
Adapting to Social Constraints	Collaboration with different ecosystem stakeholders and competitors
Adapting to Spatial Constraints	Signaling to other ecosystem stakeholders

Table 9. Similarities between Accelerators from Skåne and Dhaka

4.2.1 Promoting Entrepreneurship Culture

We were surprised to find that the role of both accelerators seemed to include *promoting entrepreneurship culture* throughout the region. This entrepreneurship culture, or startup mindset, reflected high-growth ambitions and was generally defined by startup founders as a "*push to drive excellence, build useful products, provide value, drive, grow, have infinite amount of grit*" and "*always trying to be the best at what you're doing*" (Rajib Imteaz, Dhaka Accelerator). External advisors and startup founders also defined entrepreneurship culture as a mindset that allows for the management of scarce resources and uncertainty. For example, Leia Organa, an external advisor of Skåne accelerator, described the resource-scarce nature of incubators and accelerators in the region: "*we are also treating ourselves like startups in terms of that you can keep pushing yourself and keep working with [being] under-funded and bootstrapping*".

Each case was explicit in their goal of promoting a startup mindset in the region. In the Dhaka accelerator, one accelerator manager stated their goal as being part of a "*cultural osmosis*" to instill entrepreneurial culture and mindset in young startup founders (Khaled Karim, Accelerator Manager). At the same time, Skåne accelerator emphasized selecting and coaching a startup team based on their ambition to live a startup lifestyle (Neil Nilsson, Accelerator Manager; *see table 10*). Interestingly, however, one Dhaka startup founder emphasized the importance of being cautious about applying these cultural values to the Bangladeshi context, cautioning that such an approach causes stakeholders to miss out on the "*values and traditions of the Eastern part of the world*" (Naeem Imran, Startup Founder). We delve further into these findings in this section.

Representative Quotes of Shared Institutional Adaptation

2nd-Order Theme	Region	Representative Quotes
Promoting Entrepreneurship Culture	Dhaka	"*So the entire concept of startup was not there. So I still remember when we did the very first batch of accelerators, we were teaching people what a startup is. So it's not only kind of someone coming in with an idea, and then trying to build their business, rather, the approach, they need to take sort of 10, 20 times of growth, they need to deliver at the same time, these structuring the entire process, understanding the product fit, etc" (Monzur Morshed, Accelerator Manager, Dhaka).* *"At one point, they just blindly followed the Y-combinator. And there is a huge influence of it. And the problem with that is we sometimes miss out on a lot of business, I would say, values, and not just values, the values and traditions of the eastern part of the world" (Naeem Imran, Startup Founder, Dhaka).*
	Skåne	*"And of course, the team. The teams - we meet early, we ask them what kind of life they want to live, what kind of company they want to build. Everything has to be aligned. You know (Neil Nilsson, Accelerator Manager, Skåne)".* *"Yes. I'm talking about that. There's other ways of financing a company, but it's also other ways of living your life and building your startup" (Neil Nilsson, Accelerator Manager, Skåne).*

Table 10. Representative Quotes for Second Order Themes, Promoting Entrepreneurship Culture

Dhaka Accelerator

As one of the first accelerators in a country with a nascent startup culture, the success of Dhaka Accelerator is tied with promoting a startup mindset and entrepreneurial culture in order to yield better outcomes for founders. Monzur Morshed, a manager of Dhaka Accelerator stated that they taught early startup cohorts what it actually "*meant to be a startup"*. He goes on to illustrate: "*So*

the entire kind of concept of startup was not there. So I still remember when we did the very first batch of accelerators, we were teaching people what a startup is. So it's not only kind of someone coming in with an idea, and then trying to build their business, rather, the approach, they need to take sort of 10, 20 times of growth, they need to deliver at the same time, these structuring the entire process, understanding the product fit, etc".

At the accelerator's inception, Monzur Morshed recalled how he leveraged the nascent community that was forming around the concept of startup. He explained the accelerator's strategy of identifying early, key individuals that would shape the accelerator by using local, young startup communities and finding community champions. "*We started to recruit these people who are already part of this community, teachers who actually teach entrepreneurship in the university, so many people and we started to kind of connect with the broader group through them. That helped in two ways. One is the trust factor, because these guys are known to them, that really helped to pull the crowd in. The second one was, we have to understand even we were new. It's not that I knew everything about startup back at that point in time. So I had to rely heavily on people who are much closer to the idea. And that expertise really helped us to shape up our communication".*

While many Dhaka-based accelerator managers and startup founders extolled the benefits of adopting a startup mindset, one startup founder underscored that when accelerators propagate Western standards unmindfully, they lose out on the opportunity to use the strength of local cultures and norms. Startup founder Naeem Imran drew his observation on adopting Western mandates: *"At one point, they [accelerator managers] just blindly followed the Y-combinator. And there is a huge influence of it. And the problem with that is we sometimes miss out on a lot of business, I would say, values, and not just values, the values and traditions of the eastern part of the world".*

Naeem Imran continued to go on, further strengthening his position by referencing the layoffs that occurred throughout the technology industry in the United States and other Western countries in recent years: "*And there's a lot of goodness in that also like, thinking about in human resources now how everyone was dealing with layoffs. You have people like I have*

co-workers who have been with the company for 30 years, and then all of a sudden, like, your emails don't work, because they didn't even let you know that you're fired". He considers these practices to have a Western origin, and states concern that they have arrived in part due to the rise of startup culture: "*So all of these practices, these are not very common in this part of the world. But now you see those trickling down here".*

Skåne Accelerator

Neil Nilsson, an accelerator manager, elaborated on how Skåne Accelerator's selection criteria was predicated on the importance of having a venture capital mindset and lifestyle. In his words, *"it's super important for us that you have a team that can build stuff...we were super focused on teams who want to go the VC route".* He underlined the high value they place on the founder's intention in the near future, especially in the next funding round. In their selection process, in fact, Skåne Accelerator prioritized startup founders, who, after participating in their program, would be ready to *"get dressed for the VC round"*. Neil Nilsson goes on to say that the team must also be aligned in having a high-tech, high-growth mindset: *"And of course, the team. The teams - we meet early, we ask them what kind of life they want to live, what kind of company they want to build. Everything has to be aligned".*

Interestingly, the manager reiterated this point throughout the interview: *"I'm super specific. I work with the teams who want to go the VC route."* Neil Nilsson went on to stress the high growth expectation from the portfolio startup founders: *"Yes. I'm talking about that. There's other ways of financing a company, but it's also other ways of living your life and building your startup".* He elaborated his point by giving examples of how people have different life choices and goals. However, he says, founders who choose to be part of Skåne accelerator are expected to grow very fast and adopt that fast pace through VC funding. Thus, while the promotion of entrepreneurship culture is similar to that of Dhaka Accelerator, we found that Skåne Accelerator promoted a certain founder and entrepreneurial philosophy suited to match the accelerated growth speed of their respective startups and the high-growth goal of its city.

4.2.2 Collaboration with different ecosystem stakeholders and competitors

We found that collaboration was a common theme among both of our cases. This shared adaptation strategy generally came from an implicit understanding that accelerators were important to the economic development and welfare of the region. In the case of Dhaka Accelerator (a corporate-funded organization), accelerator managers saw their role through an altruistic lens: *"So one of the things that we did was, in principle, we all just said that this accelerator program does not only belong to [Dhaka Accelerator], rather, it's something we're building for the nation"* (Monzur Morshed). At the same time, an external advisor commented that *"it's just a will to to do good for the region that really drives us all"* (Leia Organa, Skåne Accelerator). In this section, we delve further into the nature and reasoning of this collaboration.

Representative Quotes of Shared Social Adaptation

2nd-Order Themes	Region	Representative Quotes
Collaboration with different ecosystem stakeholders and competitors	Dhaka	*"...even in one of the cases our demo day KPIs was that you had to have a contract signed with one of our competitors, because his (startup founder's) product was much more applicable for the competition. The success for these startups were never tied to how much benefit we receive as a company. Rather, we expect to make sure that the startup should achieve the very best result possible. And at times, it means that you have to have a contract with our competition" (Monzur Morshed, Accelerator Manager, Dhaka).* *"...the wider stakeholders involved, the government involved, the industry involved, the local, you know, innovation community into the whole thing in a way that it becomes, you know, almost like, you know, something that everyone takes pride in. So, each time a new cohort was designed, it was slightly better than the before. And we iterated we, you know, we kept on, you know, pivoting and tweaking the model" (Khaled Karim, Accelerator Manager, Dhaka).*
	Skåne	*"I think that it started with, at first, there was sort of a wish from the region that we should collaborate. But at the same time, I think it's more importantly, there were individuals in different environments, who had decided that this is how we're going to do it. Once enough individuals decided that we are collaborating, now, you eventually get to the right critical mass, where you actually know that that becomes true" (Leia Organa, External Advisor, Skåne).* *"...sometimes, it gets messy ... you want good companies in your accelerator, of course, you can brag a bit about them, and you get the vinnova funding and so forth" (Linnea Larsson, External Advisor, Skåne).* *"I think it's something for this region because we are a bit of an underdog to Stockholm. So people want to help each other to beat Stockholm" (Jurgen Klopp, External Advisor, Skåne).*

Table 11. Representative Quotes for Second Order Theme, Collaboration with different ecosystem stakeholders and competitors

Dhaka Accelerator

Khaled Karim, explained that to build the accelerator, they worked intricately with many stakeholders, including non-traditional stakeholders such as government representatives to reiterate the model to its present-day form. He mentioned engaging various stakeholders to form the collaboration: *"...the wider stakeholders involved, the government involved, the industry involved, the local, you know, innovation community into the whole thing in a way that it becomes, you know, almost like, you know, something that everyone takes pride in. So, each time*

a new cohort was designed, it was slightly better than the before. And we iterated we, you know, we kept on, you know, pivoting and tweaking the model".

Monzur Morshed, remarked that in collaborating with accelerators from external ecosystems, it was important that they adapted their learnings to the Bangladesh environment: *"...when we started the accelerator, we did not know exactly what we should be doing. No one did. So we looked at some of the other accelerators, saw what's really clicking. We spoke with some of the other guys in Singapore, in Norway, in Germany, understood what they're doing, and we tried to kind of copy that. But we figured that the journey that startups take in Bangladesh versus others is slightly different, right?".*

Monzur Morshed, a manager of the accelerator program in Dhaka revealed that the accelerator even collaborates with competing entities: *"...even in one of the cases our demo day KPIs was that you had to have a contract signed with one of our competitors, because his [startup founder's] product was much more applicable for the competition. The success for these startups were never tied to how much benefit we receive as a company. Rather, we expect to make sure that the startup should achieve the very best result possible. And at times, it means that you have to have a contract with our competition".*

Dhaka Accelerator's external advisors, however, remark that there are more opportunities for accelerators in the region to collaborate with VCs. Particularly, the communication channel that accelerators establish between startup founders and early stage VCs was identified by informants as a fundamental building block of startup success. Informants stated that the accelerator should act as the bridge to the VCs and connect with these investors to express their particular needs. In his own words, Mahmudul Hasan comments: *"the accelerator program[s] should openly talk to VCs, find out what they need, and help the startups scale up that way."*

Skåne Accelerator

In the Skåne region, external advisors were quick to acknowledge the scarce funding for accelerators: *"...always money, always resources, we're always underfunded"* (Leia Organa, external advisor, Skåne Accelerator). The reason for this is that most business-support

organizations in Skåne receive governmental or regional funding, and that the accelerators and incubators are competing for a limited pool of funds. While informants mentioned that this can occasionally be a source of conflict, such as when startup founders switch between accelerators (Linnea Larson, external advisor), informants also mentioned that limited funding availability is also a salient motivator for the region's collaboration.

Collaboration between accelerators and other business intermediaries in Skåne was largely characterized by referrals and the reciprocation of resources. For example, most Skåne-based informants noted that the region's plentiful sector expertise allowed them to refer founders to different support organizations (such as a medtech incubator or foodtech accelerator). *"I always connect them with the same person there and then I know that he will take it from there. So that's just an easy way. I always ask the entrepreneurs…if I connect [them with another organization], and they almost always say yes"* (Leia Organa, External Advisor).

According to Astrid Wallin, an accelerator manager, sometimes referral of startups is done out of benevolence. But often enough, the process is due to goodwill and understanding among informants that such action would be reciprocated in the future: *"I think it's also if I help you now you can help me later on"*. Another advisor encapsulated, *"We have an openness between the incubators in Skane, we are very much moving away from seeing each other as competitors, mainly to see each other as colleagues"* (Linnea Larsson, External Advisor).

Aside from practical reasons, there are also many social reasons that this collaborative spirit is enacted. We were curious about how such a level of open alliance was initiated and Leia Organa, an external advisor said, *"I think that it started with, at first, there was sort of a wish from the region that we should collaborate. But at the same time, I think it's more importantly, there were individuals in different environments, who had decided that this is how we're going to do it. Once enough individuals decided that we are collaborating, now, you eventually get to the right critical mass, where you actually know that that becomes true".* This collaborative mindset is also facilitated by close social networks, where ecosystem stakeholders know each other due to the connectedness of the industry: *"this also requires that I know the organizations and know someone to connect to"* (Leia Organa).

Leia Organa and other external advisors also contemplated the flaws of this interconnectedness: *"The closeness between Lund, Malmö, basically Skåne as a whole, makes it easier to have that ongoing dialogue. And I also think it can be both good and bad, of course. But people working in the support system, we try to, we tend to jump around. People just change the organization. But it creates like a little pond where we all know each other. And maybe we could benefit from being more open and to who comes into this support system" (Leia Organa, External Advisor).*

Aside from a general "goodwill" , informants were also interested in overcoming regional limitations facilitated by its proximity to Stockholm. At least three of our stakeholders drew an interesting analogy to the region's relationship to Stockholm, describing the Skåne region as an "underdog". When asked about the reason for collaboration in the region, one of the external advisors articulated candidly, *"I think it's something for this region because we are a bit of an underdog to Stockholm. So people want to help each other to beat Stockholm"* (Jurgen Klopp, External Advisor).

4.2.3 Signaling to other ecosystem stakeholders

We found that informants from both Skåne accelerator and Dhaka accelerator emphasized signaling to other ecosystem stakeholders in order to acquire resources for their startup founders. In Dhaka accelerator, one accelerator manager emphasized the importance of portraying Bangladesh through a strength-based, dignified lens in order to attract funding and investment to the region and "turn the tide" about the current impoverished narrative of Bangladesh (Khaled Karim). In the Skåne accelerator, informants employed similar strategies by incorporating the region's mission to meet societal challenges in their vision and mission (Astrid Wallin, External Advisor; *see table 12*). In the following section, we detail the nature and impact of this signaling strategy.

Representative Quotes of Shared Spatial Adaptations

2nd-Order Themes	Region	Representative Quotes
Signaling to other ecosystem stakeholders	Dhaka	*"We got a few founders from the market, like, Ayman Sadiq is one you will probably know from 10 Minute School. We had (Imtiaz Choudhury) from (...) and we had Sylvana from Prava - these founders came in and shared their experience. That's how we do this…..all those, old, you know, money management, fund management, teaching, business… all those, we worked to put it together" (Ashraful Alam, Accelerator Manager, Dhaka).* *"...that's probably one of the negative things about the startup and entrepreneurial world is that everyone's bragging, everyone's always talking about positive things" (Naeem Imran, Startup Founder, Dhaka).*
	Skåne	*"...also have this state perspective on things and help us as a society to meet challenges that we have. When it comes to environmental, societal, and economical sustainability, of course, economic sustainability is very important. That's the growth part. But also making the world a better place, that is, I guess, the big goal - the vision and the mission of all of us" (Astrid Wallin, External Advisor, Skåne).* *"to attract startups to the region from outside, because they are taking in startups from all over Europe, but also to promote Malmö as a brand" (Leia Organa, External Advisor, Skåne).*

Table 12. Representative Quotes for Second Order Theme, Signaling to Other Ecosystem Stakeholders

Dhaka Accelerator

From our interview, Dhaka accelerator managers implemented several signaling strategies that helped them achieve their objectives. For instance, accelerators established credibility by associating with influential stakeholders in the industrial and national level. Ashraful Alam, a

Dhaka accelerator manager mentioned many well-known names during our interview with him: "*...then the interior minister, she promised around 50 million. Another minister was here. The ICT minister was here and he also committed 30 million"*. He reiterated the accelerator's attachment with celebrity entrepreneurs from Bangladesh that were associated with their accelerator: "*We got a few founders from the market, like, Ayman Sadiq is one you will probably know from 10 Minute School. We had [Imtiaz Choudhury] ... and we had Sylvana from Prava - these founders came in and shared their experience. That's how we do this ... all those, old, you know, money management, fund management, teaching, business ... all those, we worked to put it together"*.

In Dhaka accelerator, we also saw Khaled Karim, an accelerator manager, recall the importance of telling a strength-based story to funders and investors in order to attract funding and development to the region: *"So I kind of felt obligated to, you know, turn the tide about this narrative (Bangladesh as an impoverished country). And, I saw that at that time around 65% of Bangladeshis were under 35. And they are the future of the country and, you know, how might we do something with these young people, that would give them a better future that would help them, you know, create stories, and perhaps, that will be able to amplify those stories"*.

On the other hand, one startup founder criticized that this signaling can have detrimental issues for startups *"...that's probably one of the negative things about the startup and entrepreneurial world is that everyone's bragging, everyone's always talking about positive things"* (Naeem Imran, Startup Founder). As one of the main expectations from a startup is to raise money for the next round, he mentioned feeling the indirect pressure of boasting, and the need to over-state numbers in terms of projection.

He illustrates this point through an experience with a potential foreign investor. In an effort to be transparent about this business, Naeem Imran relayed to the investor that due to the poor economy, his business growth was flat and was subsequently rejected for the investment. During our interview, he contemplated the plausible upshot of an alternative answer: *"we could definitely like you know, twist and say no, like the growth is well. And that's kind of like something that pretty much everyone does now, not just in Bangladesh, like everywhere"*.

Skåne Accelerator

During our interview with Leia Organa, a well-connected external advisor who exhibits a strong working relationship with Skåne accelerator, we were told that part of the Skåne accelerator's mission was to establish the region, particularly the city as a lucrative destination for startup founders. In her words, *"to attract startups to the region from outside, because they are taking in startups from all over Europe, but also to promote Malmö as a brand".* She spoke about how through its conscious and consistent correspondence in media, the Skåne accelerator is adapting to the city's objective, aligning it's communication strategy with the city's, raising the status of the city as an entrepreneurial city, and making it a highly desirable destination for investors.

One accelerator manager, Neil Nilsson, confirmed that over 60 percent of their portfolio startups come from outside of the region in an effort to raise the brand of the region. This comment is substantiated by Leia Organa's quote regarding the ambition of the Skåne accelerator: *"The accelerator may have Malmö-based companies, but they are aiming for all over Europe. They have a bit better spread when it comes to local companies because they're a known entity here. But I would say that their job presumably is more about attraction and brand".*

The Skåne accelerator manager emphasized the value of "word of mouth" and highlighted how it helped raise the accelerator's status and credibility in the region and throughout Europe. For example, he states of founders who choose to return home upon graduating: *"...they rave about (Skåne Accelerator). And that leads to the input again, which is like seven out of ten companies who we invest in, or get to work with, are coming from the community [of accelerator alumni]".* This increase in status helps them acquire more resources: "*And that leads us to the next investment. So the growth loop is like, join our, you know, Accelerator, dramatically improve your company in three months so it's like this: it's a compounding growth loop*".

We also interviewed Astrid Wallin, an external advisor who provided a different perspective. While maintaining that achieving economic development was important, she attached quite strong value to the notion of doing good and working towards the betterment of society. She affirmed that since the Skåne accelerator was owned by the city, it had certain responsibilities

beyond the obvious growth objective, which was signaled through the mission and vision: *"...also have this state perspective on things and help us as a society to meet challenges that we have. When it comes to environmental, societal, and economical sustainability, of course, economic sustainability is very important. That's the growth part. But also making the world a better place, that is, I guess, the big goal - the vision and the mission of all of us".*

5. Discussion

Through our study, we have strived to learn how accelerators adapt to the institutional, social, and spatial constraints of their regions. We found that there were many differences in how our Skåne and Dhaka cases adapted to their respective regional context, especially related to institutional constraints. These findings provide some evidence that regional context can affect the outcomes of accelerators, and thus startups. We were also interested to find that there was robust evidence of shared adaptations between cases, though there are regional considerations in how these adaptations are applied. Overall, these results provide a broad understanding of how regional context and accelerator outcomes are related, as accelerator managers implemented these strategies to improve outcomes for their respective startup portfolios. In this section, we will discuss the findings of the study by relating these differences and similarities in adaptations to the existing literature on accelerators and entrepreneurial contexts. Afterwards, we draw from the literature and our findings to present a working theory of accelerator practices in emerging and established ecosystems.

5.1 Differences between cases

In their qualitative study of American university incubators, Amezcua et. al (2013) demonstrate that outcomes for business-support organizations (such as accelerators) are dependent on whether services meet organizational needs associated with environmental contexts. Thus, it is important for accelerator managers to consider the context-specific factors of their region when directing an accelerator. To highlight the need for accelerators' adaptation to regional contexts, we present the different regional adaptations employed by our cases and examine their contributions to the literature on accelerators and contextualizing entrepreneurship.

5.1.1 Greater Institutional Constraints for Dhaka

According to Welter and Smallbone (2011), institutional context "influences the nature, pace of development, and extent of entrepreneurship as well as the way entrepreneurs behave" (p.108), as they can enable or constrain entrepreneurship by reducing its transaction costs, risks, and outcome uncertainty (North, 1991). In contrast to Skåne, the Dhaka region was more inundated with institutional constraints related to complex regulatory frameworks and less developed societal and cultural support of entrepreneurship. In turn, these institutional constraints contributed to the social and spatial constraints in the region, affecting the extent of entrepreneurship (availability of experienced founders) and the pace of development of the region (availability of startup investment) as Dhaka-based accelerator managers, startup founders, and external advisors readily testified. Our findings on these institutional constraints support prior research on how institutions affect entrepreneurship in emerging countries.

Many studies have shown that *formal* institutions, in particular, can either constrain or expand opportunities for startups to do business, since the complexity of policy can determine who enters the market and the resources available to startups, for example (Welter & Smallbone, 2011). Furthermore, this is particularly true for emerging market contexts with ambiguous institutional frameworks (Welter & Smallbone, 2011). Previous literature has also found that *informal institutions*, such as societal values regarding entrepreneurship can affect individuals' decisions to pursue entrepreneurship (Aldrich and Cliff, 2003), thus affecting the availability of entrepreneurial talent to draw from. Accelerator managers and startup founders overcame this constraint by setting up pre-accelerators (Khaled Karim, accelerator manager), encouraging startups to incorporate in Delaware, United States or Singapore, and "holding-hands" of startups (Monzur Morshed, accelerator manager). Currently, few research exists that examine the relationship between accelerators and institutional contexts in emerging regions. Thus, our findings also provide new insight into how accelerators adapt to institutional contexts, adding to the literature on accelerators.

5.1.2 Importing Entrepreneurial Knowledge vs. Increasing Network Diversity

The social fabric of an entrepreneurial ecosystem is important for entrepreneurs, as the availability of resources and talent in the ecosystem provides important support when starting

their business and overcoming liabilities of newness (Starr and MacMillan, 1990; Davidsson and Honig, 2003). Typically, entrepreneurs use social networking to secure the resources needed for their venture, such as access to markets, funding capital, and knowledge. (Starr and MacMillan, 1990). To remedy the insufficiency of startup talent or startup knowledge in the ecosystem, our findings show that both accelerators looked to bring these resources from outside of their ecosystem. However, the extent and nature of this scarcity was different between our advanced and emerging cases, calling for different adaptation strategies.

In their systematic literature review of emerging ecosystems versus advanced ecosystems, Cao and Shi (2021) identify human and capital scarcities as factors that inhibits entrepreneurship to a larger extent in emerging economies than in established economies. Because the prevalence of opportunity-driven entrepreneurship is lower in an emerging ecosystem, it can be challenging to find experienced mentors with entrepreneurial skills and knowledge, particularly specialized knowledge of up-and-coming industries (Goswami, Mitchell & Bhagavatula, 2018). Startup founders and accelerator managers from Dhaka acknowledged the need to bring in "mentors from abroad" who have started their own opportunity-driven businesses—not just necessity-driven businesses such as family businesses. The Dhaka case worked to remedy this constraint by leveraging its extensive corporate resources to bring mentors and speakers from external ecosystems such as Singapore (Khaled Karim, Accelerator Manager), suggesting that accelerators from emerging regions must make more resource-intensive efforts to import entrepreneurial knowledge.

On the other hand, in an established economy, high-quality entrepreneurial knowledge is accessible and widely available (Uzzi, 1997). Accordingly, the Skåne accelerator was less concerned than our Dhaka case with increasing the availability of entrepreneurial skills and knowledge in the region. Rather, it was concerned with increasing its network diversity to influence the nature of entrepreneurship in the region towards high-tech, high-growth ventures. In their meta-analysis of contextual factors on the link between the social capital of entrepreneurs and small-firm performance, Stam, Arzlanian, and Elfring (2014) found that network diversity was the strongest indicator of firm performance, particularly for startups and high-tech industries in established economies such as the Skåne region. Additionally, the effect of network diversity

on startup performance is shown to have a weaker relationship in emerging regions due to the need for strong ties to bridge institutional constraints (Stam, Arzlanian, & Elfring, 2014).

Overall, these findings relate to how accelerators adapt to social constraints and support the well-established research on entrepreneurship and social context. However, our study adds to this literature by differentiating the nature of social constraints in emerging and established regions. Furthermore, our study contributes to literature on accelerators by highlighting the importance of social context in accelerator adaptations and outcomes—particularly accelerators' efforts to bridge gaps in entrepreneurial knowledge in emerging regions and gaps in network diversity in established regions.

5.1.3 Differences in Spatial Constraints

In the aforementioned systematic literature review by Cao and Shi (2021), another resource scarcity that affects emerging economies are *financial resource gaps* due to a lack of private investment and public resources. Due to a lack of societal and cultural understanding of entrepreneurship, this financing gap can be due to a risk-averse culture where local investors are fearful to engage in risky investments (Swierczek and Ha, 2003). This may explain why Ashiq Tamzid, a startup founder part of Dhaka Accelerator, estimates that only 30 percent of funding comes from local Bangladeshi investors.

At the same time, our findings show that geographical factors can interact with institutional factors to affect funding, as informants from both Dhaka and Skåne accelerators readily attested. For example, many informants emphasized that the size and density of the Indian market overshadows Bangladesh, drawing away attention from global investors (Khaled Karim, accelerator manager). The placement of a region can constrain funding opportunities for accelerators because of their proximity to other ecosystems and their access to global markets (Zahra, Wright, and Abdelgawad, 2014). Nachum, Zaheer, and Gross (2008) find that, even in light of increasing digitalization and globalization, proximity to market, knowledge, and resources are important in attracting international firms. Generally, the research on how spatial context affects the extent and nature of entrepreneurial activities is underdeveloped in comparison to social and institutional contexts (Trettin and Welter, 2011). Our findings thus

contribute to the research on spatial context and entrepreneurship by highlighting how funding investment is affected by geographical factors such as our cases' proximity to renowned ecosystems such as Stockholm, Copenhagen, Bangalore, and New Delhi.

Our findings also show that there is a marked difference in how accelerators overcome spatial constraints. Notably, Skåne accelerator used digitalization and globalization strategies to bridge the lack of venture capital funding in the region (Neil Nilsson, accelerator manager). In contrast with the aforementioned study by Nachum, Zaheer, and Gross (2008), there is a plethora of literature that shows how growing digital entrepreneurial ecosystems affect firm-level outcomes such as the recognition of new opportunities and the development of new markets (Kraus, Roig-Tierno & Bouncken, 2019). Additionally, Boucken and Kraus (2021) state that while social factors such as norms and trust are fundamental to entrepreneurial ecosystems, these factors are strengthened through the use of digital technology and tools. As regions grow their interconnectedness through internet connectivity and speed, these international connections are enabled (Kraus, Roig-Tierno & Bouncken, 2019). Our findings show how accelerators can leverage digital tools to remedy spatial constraints such as geographical proximity to- and density of- funding entities.

5.2 Similarities between cases

By presenting the difference in adaptations and regional context in accelerators, we have communicated the importance of regional context in accelerators. In the current section, we seek to present how accelerator adaptations across emerging and established contexts are similar. Our purpose of this section is to contribute to the overall literature on accelerators by highlighting best practices across regions. We also seek to show how accelerators are affected by their environment by illustrating the underlying complexity of applying shared practices to different contexts.

5.2.1 Promoting Entrepreneurship Culture

As aforementioned, institutional context influences the nature and extent of entrepreneurship, as well as the behavior of entrepreneurs (Welter and Smallbone, 2011). In addition, institutional context can affect the types of firms that are created, how they are created, and their growth over

time (Zahra, 2011). From a startup perspective, the knowledge- and culture-related resources that accelerators promulgate are seen as valuable resources by entrepreneurs in improving their business outcomes (Lange and Johnston, 2020). In our study, we observed that both cases went through efforts to increase the availability and quality of opportunity-driven entrepreneurship by promulgating entrepreneurship culture, the unsaid thoughts, beliefs, and values of entrepreneurship (Brandl and Bullinger, 2009). For example, Skåne accelerator emphasized their efforts to select and coach founders based on their willingness to lead a high-growth lifestyle (Neil Nilsson, accelerator manager). In this way, accelerators can be seen as an institution that reifies these cultural values (Brandl and Bullinger, 2009).

While there can be positive effects of promoting entrepreneurship culture, one founder cautioned that blindly applying these cultural ideals can eclipse the local culture and business practices that strengthen regional innovation (Naeem Imram, Dhaka Accelerator). This supports past studies that have observed cultural diversity as important for the creation of new firms (Audretsch, Dohse, & Niebuhr, 2010), and entrepreneurial performance, particularly for highly-skilled workers (Rodriguez-Pose & Hardy, 2015). Taken as a whole, these findings contribute to the accelerator literature by suggesting that, across regions, accelerators use the promotion of this culture as a tool to promote better startup and regional outcomes. Additionally, the study also suggests that accelerations can be seen as institutions that promote the cultural value of entrepreneurship — for better or for worse.

5.2.2 Collaboration with different ecosystem stakeholders and competitors

We reiterate Boucken and Kraus's (2021) statement that norms and trust are fundamental to entrepreneurial ecosystems. This is true especially when occurring in a specific region, since this allows connectedness between business-support organizations. The resulting collaboration between ecosystem stakeholders is shown to result in increased access to social networks in a region (Letaifa & Rabeau, 2013). Additionally, this collaboration is shown to have positive effects in both advanced and emerging economies (Cao & Shi, 2021).

In their study on the intermediary role of accelerators in an emerging ecosystem, Goswami (2018) finds that a commitment to the regional entrepreneurial ecosystem was a driver of

collaboration between accelerators in Bangalore, India. This aligns with our findings, which showed that both Skåne and Dhaka accelerators were interested in working with even competing ecosystem stakeholders to promote better outcomes for all startups in the region. However, despite this altruistic underpinning, some external advisors from the Skåne region noted that while the connectedness of the ecosystem was beneficial, this characteristic sometimes prevented newcomers from entering the industry (Astrid Wallen, external advisor, Skåne). In fact, Welter (2011) warns of a "dark-side" of socio-spatial embeddedness, where tight networks built on trust can actually result in "closed local networks", becoming an impediment for organizations seeking to create social change.

Aside from Goswami (2018), current literature on accelerators does not identify collaboration as a characterizing attribute of accelerators. Thus, our findings contribute to the literature on accelerators by illustrating the role of collaboration across regional contexts in increasing startup outcomes. However, future studies should consider the dual effects that collaborative practices may have on both increasing and decreasing access to social resources in regions.

5.2.3 Signaling to other ecosystem stakeholders through communication and branding

In their multi-method study on the effectiveness of accelerators, Hallen, Cohen, and Bingham (2020) measure the effectiveness of accelerators by controlling for sorting and signaling effects. Aside from this study, scant literature examines the role of signaling in accelerators. According to our findings, signaling the quality of their accelerators to the ecosystem was a consistent theme among accelerator managers and external advisors from both regions. This signaling was done in efforts to establish high-quality partnerships with surrounding VCs and funders to secure resources for startup portfolios (Lee, Pollock & Jin, 2011). However, signaling is thought to be inversely related to quality (Spence, 1973), which may explain one founder's observation that these signaling strategies can dilute cultural and business values of the region (Naeem Imran, Startup Founder, Dhaka Accelerator). Thus, our paper contributes to the accelerator literature by suggesting that signaling plays an important part in outcomes across different regions. However, future research should consider how signaling strategies may exhibit inverse relationships to the desired outcomes of accelerators and their portfolios.

5.3 A Working Theory of Accelerator Practices in Emerging and Established Ecosystems

Our analysis of findings and subsequent analysis of the literature have led us to develop a substantive theory that reflects the ***unique adaptations*** and ***shared adaptations*** of accelerators from ***emerging*** and ***established*** ecosystems. To illustrate this concept, we use a venn diagram to distinguish between adaptations that can be expected from accelerators in emerging regions and established regions. To acknowledge the interaction between institutional, social, and spatial contexts (Welter, 2011), as well as the interaction of accelerators with their environments (Welter & Baker, 2020), we show that these adaptations exhibit a two-way relationship with a ***confluence of institutional, social, and spatial contexts*** that characterize- and exist between-regions. Finally, through strategies such as promoting entrepreneurship culture, attracting investors, and increasing network diversity, the model also shows how accelerators interact with their environment to affect the ***extent and type of entrepreneurship*** in the region, as suggested by Welter and Smallbone (2011) and responses from our informants.

Our purpose for this framework is to develop a substantive theory that can offer a broad, conceptual understanding of accelerators that can be used in emerging and established regions (Magnani & Gioia, 2022). Concerning this framework, we offer the following propositions to guide future research:

- *Proposition 1:* Accelerators in emerging regions must make greater efforts to overcome *institutional constraints,* such as complex regulatory frameworks and lack of societal support of entrepreneurship.
- *Proposition 2:* To overcome the social constraints of their respective regions, accelerators in emerging regions import startup knowledge, while accelerators from established regions attract talent to improve regional network diversity.
- *Proposition 3:* Accelerators in established regions are more likely to bridge funding gaps through digitalization and education of venture capital.
- *Proposition 4:* Accelerators from emerging and established regions employ shared adaptations including *promoting entrepreneurship culture*, *collaborating with ecosystem stakeholders*, and *signaling to acquire resources*.
- *Proposition 5:* The institutional, social, and spatial contexts affect the *extent* and *type* of entrepreneurship in the region.

- *Proposition 6:* In conjunction with their context, accelerators from emerging and established regions affect the *extent* and *type* of entrepreneurship in the region through their efforts to adapt to their institutional, social, and spatial constraints.

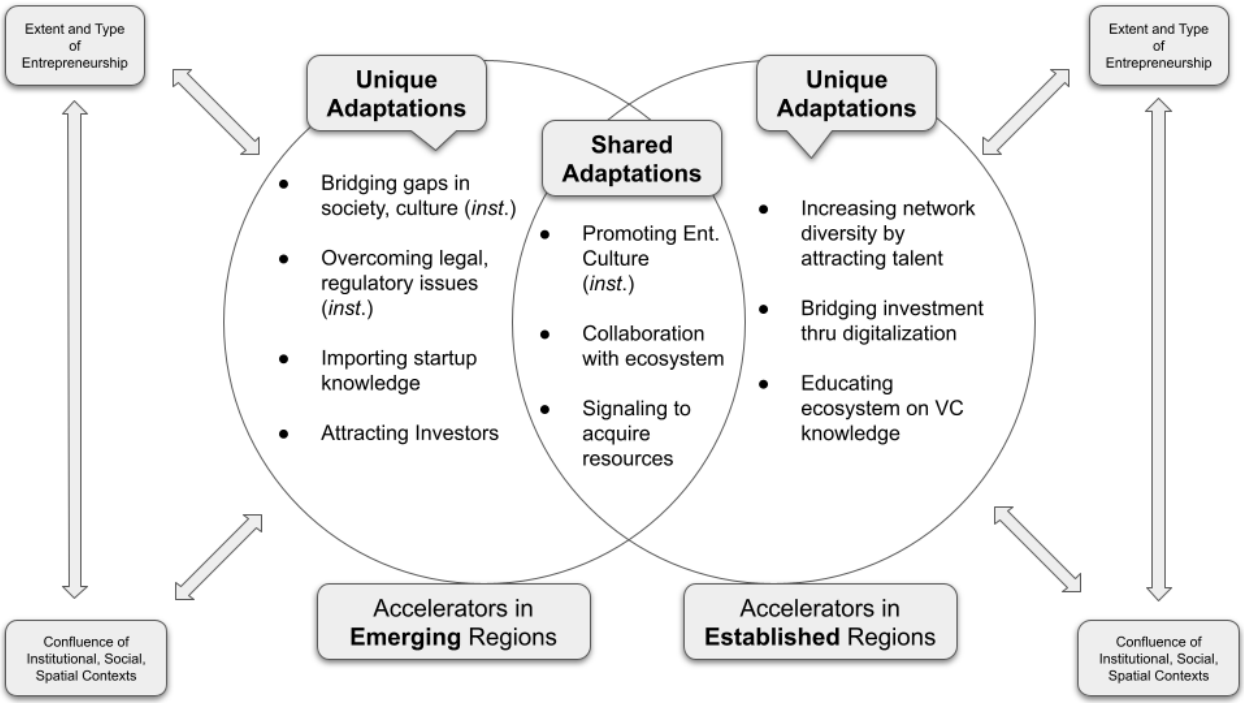

Figure 3. A Framework of Accelerator Practices in Emerging and Established Ecosystems

6. Conclusion

Through our analysis of accelerators in Dhaka and Skåne, we have sought to better understand the role of regional context in accelerators. Specifically, we have made efforts to understand how accelerators adapt to institutional, social, and spatial constraints–paying close attention to the differences and similarities of accelerators in emerging and established ecosystems. We investigated this by selecting two similar cases in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and Skåne, Sweden and interviewing accelerator managers, startup founders, and external advisors from each region. We found that there are marked differences between the regional constraints that accelerators in emerging ecosystems vs. established ecosystems must adapt to. Dhaka, in particular, is more subject to formal and informal institutional constraints that affect the prevalence of entrepreneurship. At the same time, we identified that promoting entrepreneurship culture, collaboration, and signaling were strategies that accelerators employed across contexts. Finally,

we have presented a working theory of accelerator practices in emerging and established ecosystems that can be used for future research and practitioners.

6.1 Implications for Practitioners

In their qualitative study of American university incubators, Amezcua et. al (2013) demonstrate that outcomes for business-support organizations (such as accelerators) are dependent on whether services meet organizational needs associated with environmental contexts. Thus, it is important for accelerator managers to consider the context-specific factors of their region when directing an accelerator. Our study suggests that policy makers and accelerator managers seeking to establish an accelerator to promote investment and economic growth should pay careful attention to regional constraints.

Our informants confirmed that accelerators in emerging ecosystems face greater institutional challenges than those in established ecosystems. Practitioners should take note of our cases and collaborate with ecosystem stakeholders such as government officials, venture capitalists, and even competing organizations to help startup founders bridge institutional gaps such as complex regulations and lack of cultural understanding.

Practitioners from both emerging and established regions can utilize the common strategies that our cases used to overcome constraints in their region. These include promoting entrepreneurship culture, collaborating with ecosystem stakeholders, and signaling to ecosystem stakeholders. Practitioners should still take caution in implementing these blindly, however, as a few informants cautioned that these practices can dilute local culture and business practices. In fact, these local assets can be seen as a source of strength for accelerators (Naeem Imran, startup founder).

6.2 Limitations and Implications for Future Research

Corporate-run accelerators and government-run accelerators have different reasons for their establishment and differing goals. Corporate-run accelerators are often established to transfer technology innovation into the sponsor corporation through “digital transformation” (Kanbach and Stubner, 2016), while government-run accelerators typically have broader, social goals

related to the economic development of the region (Crisan et. al, 2019). For this reason, we must be careful to draw categorical conclusions between our cases since the strategies they use to adapt can be partly explained by differing objectives. Instead, our research provides a broad, conceptual framework of adaptation strategies used by our cases that can be applied to future studies (Gioia & Magnani, 2022). Future research can build upon this framework by comparing accelerators that are closer in type.

Additionally, while the Skåne and Dhaka regions share some similarities the startup ecosystems are at different levels of development. While we have viewed this difference in regional maturity through a "spatial lens", examining how the differences in present business support structures in each region cause accelerators to adapt (i.e. attracting investors to the region), we have not contextualized our study to examine how history and temporal factors have yielded the present ecosystems of these regions (Tettrin & Welter, 2011; Wadhwani et. al, 2020).

In our study, we have mostly observed the one-way effects of context on accelerators and how they adapt to their environment. However, accelerators are shown to interact with and change the ecosystems that they conduct business in (Hochberg, 2016). To fully understand the nature of how accelerators adapt to context, it is necessary that we understand how accelerators also affect their environment, and how they are "doing contexts" (Welter & Baker, 2020). Future studies should expand their analysis to examine the recursive effects of accelerators. In other words, they should examine how accelerators are both affected by, and influence regions.

Lastly, another limitation of our study is the lack of female stakeholders that we interviewed from the Dhaka region. While the ecosystem is still developing and there are certainly fewer women involved in accelerators in Bangladesh, we were not able to pursue opportunities for us to interview female advisors, investors, and founders due to time constraints. However, it has been shown that women's contributions to entrepreneurship in developing ecosystems are especially impactful and relevant, especially in emerging ecosystems (Rashid & Ratten, 2020). Future studies can employ a more discerning social contextual lens to understand how household and family affect discrete contextual variables such as entrepreneurial motivations (Welter, 2011).

Works Cited

Aldrich, H. E. & Cliff, J. E. (2003). The Pervasive Effects of Family on Entrepreneurship: Toward a Family Embeddedness Perspective, *Journal of Business Venturing*, vol. 18, no. 5, pp.573–596

Amezcua, A. S., Grimes, M. G., Bradley, S. W. & Wiklund, J. (2013). Organizational Sponsorship and Founding Environments: A Contingency View on the Survival of Business-Incubated Firms, 1994–2007, *Academy of Management Journal*, vol. 56, no. 6, pp.1628–1654

Audretsch, D., Dohse, D. & Niebuhr, A. (2009). Cultural Diversity and Entrepreneurship: A Regional Analysis for Germany, The Annals of Regional Science, vol. 45, no. 1, pp.55–85

Bell, E., Bryman, A. & Harley, B. (2022). Business Research Methods 6E., S.L.: Oxford University Press

Ben Letaifa, S. & Rabeau, Y. (2013). Too close to Collaborate? How Geographic Proximity Could Impede Entrepreneurship and Innovation, *Journal of Business Research*, vol. 66, no. 10, pp.2071–2078

Bliemel, M., Flores, R., De Klerk, S. & Miles, M. P. (2019). Accelerators as Start-up Infrastructure for Entrepreneurial Clusters, *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, vol. 31, no. 1-2, pp.133–149

Bouncken, R. B. & Kraus, S. (2021). Entrepreneurial Ecosystems in an Interconnected World: Emergence, Governance and Digitalization, *Review of Managerial Science*

Brandl, J. & Bullinger, B. (2009). Reflections on the Societal Conditions for the Pervasiveness of Entrepreneurial Behavior in Western Societies, *Journal of Management Inquiry*, vol. 18, no. 2, pp.159–173

Cao, Z. & Shi, X. (2021). A Systematic Literature Review of Entrepreneurial Ecosystems in Advanced and Emerging Economies, *Small Business Economics*, no. 57, pp.75–110

Cohen, S. L., Bingham, C. B. & Hallen, B. L. (2019). The Role of Accelerator Designs in

Mitigating Bounded Rationality in New Ventures, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, vol. 64, no. 4, pp.810–854

Cohen, S. & Hochberg, Y. V. (2014). Accelerating Startups: The Seed Accelerator Phenomenon, *Papers.ssrn.com*, Available Online: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2418000

Crișan, E. L., Salanță, I. I., Beleiu, I. N., Bordean, O. N. & Bunduchi, R. (2019). A Systematic Literature Review on Accelerators, *The Journal of Technology Transfer*, vol. 46

Dahl, D. (2011). How to Choose an Incubator, *The New York Times*, 26 January, Available Online: http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/27/business/smallbusiness/27sbiz.html?_r=0

Davidsson, P. & Honig, B. (2003). The Role of Social and Human Capital among Nascent Entrepreneurs, *Journal of Business Venturing*, vol. 18, no. 3, pp.301–331

Davidsson, P., Hunter, E. & Klofsten, M. (2006). Institutional Forces, *International Small Business Journal: Researching Entrepreneurship*, vol. 24, no. 2, pp.115–131

Dutt, N., Hawn, O., Vidal, E., Chatterji, A., McGahan, A. & Mitchell, W. (2016). How Open System Intermediaries Address Institutional Failures: The Case of Business Incubators in Emerging-Market Countries, Academy of Management Journal, vol. 59, no. 3, pp.818–840

Eisenhardt, K. M. & Graebner, M. E. (2007). Theory Building from Cases: Opportunities and Challenges, Academy of Management Journal, vol. 50, no. 1, pp.25–32

Gioia, D. A., Corley, K. G. & Hamilton, A. L. (2012). Seeking Qualitative Rigor in Inductive Research, *Organizational Research Methods*, [e-journal] vol. 16, no. 1, pp.15–31, Available Online: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1094428112452151

Gonzalez-Uribe, J. & Leatherbee, M. (2017). The Effects of Business Accelerators on Venture Performance: Evidence from Start-up Chile, *The Review of Financial Studies*, vol. 31, no. 4, pp.1566–1603

Goswami, K., Mitchell, J. R. & Bhagavatula, S. (2018). Accelerator Expertise: Understanding

the Intermediary Role of Accelerators in the Development of the Bangalore Entrepreneurial Ecosystem, *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, vol. 12, no. 1, pp.117–150

Granovetter, M. (1985). Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness, *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 91, no. 3, pp.481–510

Hallen, B. L., Cohen, S. L. & Bingham, C. B. (2020). Do Accelerators Work? If So, How?, *Organization Science*, vol. 31, no. 2, pp.378–414

Hochberg, Y. V. (2016). Accelerating Entrepreneurs and Ecosystems: The Seed Accelerator Model, *Innovation Policy and the Economy*, vol. 16, pp.25–51

Hoskisson, R. E., Eden, L., Lau, C. M. & Wright, M. (2000). STRATEGY in EMERGING ECONOMIES., *Academy of Management Journal*, vol. 43, no. 3, pp.249–267

IMF. (2023). Https://www.imf.org/External/Datamapper/NGDPDPC@WEO/BGD/SWE, *www.imf.org*, Available Online: https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/NGDPDPC@WEO/BGD/SWE [Accessed 24 May 2023]

Jackson, P. & Richter, N. (2017). Situational Logic: An Analysis of Open Innovation Using Corporate Accelerators, *International Journal of Innovation Management*, vol. 21, no. 07, p.1750062

Johns, G. (2006). The Essential Impact of Context on Organizational Behavior, *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 31, no. 2, pp.386–408

Kanbach, D. K. & Stubner, S. (2016). Corporate Accelerators as Recent Form of Startup Engagement: The What, the Why, and the How, *Journal of Applied Business Research (JABR)*, vol. 32, no. 6, p.1761

Kempner, R. (2015). Randall Kempner and Peter Roberts: Aren't Accelerators Great? Maybe…, *WSJ*, Available Online: https://www.wsj.com/articles/BL-232B-3557 [Accessed 24 February 2023]

Kraus, S., Roig-Tierno, N. & Bouncken, R. B. (2019). Digital Innovation and Venturing: An Introduction into the Digitalization of Entrepreneurship, *Review of Managerial Science*, vol. 13, no. 3, pp.519–528

Lange, G. S. & Johnston, W. J. (2020). The Value of Business Accelerators and Incubators – an Entrepreneur's Perspective, *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*

Lee, P. M., Pollock, T. G. & Jin, K. (2011). The Contingent Value of Venture Capitalist Reputation, *Strategic Organization*, vol. 9, no. 1, pp.33–69

LightCastle Analytics. (2022). Bangladesh Startups Ecosystem and Funding Landscape 2021-22 - LCP, *LightCastle Partners*, Available Online: https://www.lightcastlebd.com/insights/2022/07/bangladesh-startups-ecosystem-report-2021-22/ [Accessed 23 May 2023]

Magnani, G. & Gioia, D. (2022). Using the Gioia Methodology in International Business and Entrepreneurship Research, *International Business Review*, vol. 32, no. 2, p.102097

Nachum, L., Zaheer, S. & Gross, S. (2008). Does It Matter Where Countries Are? Proximity to Knowledge, Markets and Resources, and Mne Location Choices, *Management Science*, vol. 54, no. 7, pp.1252–1265

North, D. C. (1991). Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance., *The Economic Journal*, vol. 101, no. 409, p.1587

OECD. (2012). OECD 28th Territorial Development Policy Committee Public Investment across Levels of Government: The Case of Region Skåne, Sweden, Available Online: https://www.oecd.org/cfe/regionaldevelopment/Skane_edited.pdf [Accessed 23 May 2023]

Pauwels, C., Clarysse, B., Wright, M. & Van Hove, J. (2016). Understanding a New Generation Incubation Model: The Accelerator, *Technovation*, vol. 50-51, pp.13–24

PwC. (2017). The Long View How Will the Global Economic Order Change by 2050?, Available Online: https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/world-2050/assets/pwc-the-world-in-2050-full-report-feb-2017.pdf

Rashid, S. & Ratten, V. (2020). A Systematic Literature Review on Women Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies While Reflecting Specifically on SAARC Countries, *Contributions to Management Science*, pp.37–88

Rodríguez-Pose, A. & Hardy, D. (2015). Cultural Diversity and Entrepreneurship in England and Wales, Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space, vol. 47, no. 2, pp.392–411

Rousseau, D. M. & Fried, Y. (2001). Location, Location, Location: Contextualizing Organizational Research, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, vol. 22, no. 1, pp.1–13

Scheidgen, K. & Brattström, A. (2022). Berlin Is Hotter than Silicon Valley! How Networking Temperature Shapes Entrepreneurs' Networking across Social Contexts, *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, p.104225872211347

Scott, A. J. (1999). The Cultural Economy: Geography and the Creative Field, *Media, Culture & Society*, vol. 21, no. 6, pp.807–817

Spence, M. (1973). Job Market Signaling, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, vol. 87, no. 3, pp.355–374

Stam, E. & van de Ven, A. (2019). Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Elements, *Small Business Economics*, [e-journal] vol. 56, no. 2, Available Online: https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11187-019-00270-6

Stam, W., Arzlanian, S. & Elfring, T. (2014). Social Capital of Entrepreneurs and Small Firm Performance: A Meta-Analysis of Contextual and Methodological Moderators, *Journal of Business Venturing*, vol. 29, no. 1, pp.152–173

Starr, J. A. & MacMillan, I. C. (1990). Resource Cooptation via Social Contracting: Resource Acquisition Strategies for New Ventures, *Strategic Management Journal*, vol. 11, pp.79–92

Steyaert, C. & Katz, J. (2004). Reclaiming the Space of Entrepreneurship in Society: Geographical, Discursive and Social Dimensions, *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, vol. 16, no. 3, pp.179–196

Swierczek, F. W. & Ha, T. T. (2003). Entrepreneurial Orientation, Uncertainty Avoidance and Firm Performance, *The International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp.46–58

Thornton, P. H. & Flynn, K. H. (2003). Entrepreneurship, Networks, and Geographies, *Handbook of Entrepreneurship Research*, Kluwer Academic Publisher, pp.401–433

Trettin, L. & Welter, F. (2011). Challenges for Spatially Oriented Entrepreneurship Research, *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, vol. 23, no. 7-8, pp.575–602

United Nations. (2021). BANGLADESH COUNTRY REPORT UN CDP Triennial Review Meeting Economic Relations Division Ministry of Finance Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Available Online: https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/Bangladesh-2021-Plenary-B.pdf

United Nations. (2022). World Economic Situation and Prospects 2022 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *www.un.org*, Available Online: https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/world-economic-situation-and-prospects-2022/

Uzzi, B. (1997). Social Structure and Competition in Interfirm Networks: The Paradox of Embeddedness, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, vol. 42, no. 1, p.35

Wadhwani, R. D., Kirsch, D., Welter, F., Gartner, W. B. & Jones, G. G. (2020). Context, Time, and Change: Historical Approaches to Entrepreneurship Research, *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, vol. 14, no. 1, pp.3–19

Welter, F. (2011). Contextualizing Entrepreneurship-Conceptual Challenges and Ways Forward, *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, vol. 35, no. 1, pp.165–184

Welter, F. & Baker, T. (2020). Moving Contexts onto New Roads: Clues from Other Disciplines, *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, vol. 45, no. 5, p.104225872093099

Welter, F. & Smallbone, D. (2011). Institutional Perspectives on Entrepreneurial Behavior in

Challenging Environments, *Journal of Small Business Management*, vol. 49, no. 1, pp.107–125

World Bank. (2022a). World Bank Country and Lending Groups, *Worldbank.org*, Available Online: https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups

World Bank. (2022b). GDP Growth (Annual %) - Bangladesh | Data, *Data.worldbank.org*, Available Online: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=BD

Yang, S., Kher, R. & Lyons, T. S. (2018). Where Do Accelerators Fit in the Venture Creation Pipeline? Different Values Brought by Different Types of Accelerators, *Entrepreneurship Research Journal*, vol. 8, no. 4

Zahra, S. A., Wright, M. & Abdelgawad, S. G. (2014). Contextualization and the Advancement of Entrepreneurship Research, *International Small Business Journal: Researching Entrepreneurship*, vol. 32, no. 5, pp.479–500

APPENDIX

Appendix A - Interview Guide: Accelerator Managers

We want to understand how the external and internal environment of an organization affects the outcome of accelerators and startup outcomes. Ultimately, we hope this research will lead to improved practices of accelerators worldwide, along with a better experience for startup portfolios.

If possible, we would like you to be as candid about your experience to the extent you feel comfortable. These interviews are anonymous, and we will never use your real name, personal information, or company information in our report.

Background Questions

- Can you please tell us about yourself and how you became involved at your accelerator?
    - Probe:: What motivated you to become involved in an accelerator?
- Can you please tell us more about your (current or former) job responsibilities?

About the Accelerator

- Can you please describe your accelerator program?
    - Probe: Why did you start this accelerator (if applicable)?
    - Probe:: What are the top 5 benefits you offer as an accelerator?
- Who are your startups and how do you help them?
- How do you choose your startups/founders?
    - Probe:: What are the expectations of startups who work with you?

Staff/Startup Attributes

- What is the typical person like here at the accelerator?
    - Probe:: What do they wear, what type of mindset, and what is their background?
- How do these attributes contribute to the success of your accelerator and startups?

Accelerator Outcomes

- What are the most important goals for your accelerator?
- How did you set these goals? How do you achieve these goals?
- Would you say that your accelerator is achieving these goals?

Accelerator environment and Startup Culture

- How does your regional environment affect your ability to deliver your outcomes?
- What is missing in the startup ecosystem here?
    - Probe:: What would you do differently?
- What other accelerators are doing good work? How is your work similar or different?

Appendix B - Interview Guide: Startups

We want to understand how the external and internal environment of an organization affects the outcome of accelerators and startup outcomes. Ultimately, we hope this research will lead to improved practices of accelerators worldwide, along with a better experience for startup portfolios.

If possible, we would like you to be as candid about your experience to the extent you feel comfortable. These interviews are anonymous, and we will never use your real name, personal information, or company information in our report.

Background Questions

- What is your educational and professional background?
    - PROBE:: How did you become an entrepreneur?
- Can you please tell us more about your role at your startup?

Accelerator Participation

- What motivated your startup to become involved in an accelerator?
- Can you please describe your experience with your accelerator/accelerator program?
- What were your most important goals for joining an accelerator?
    - PROBE:: How did the accelerator help you achieve these goals?
    - PROBE:: Would you say that your startup achieved those goals?
- How would you describe the staff you worked with at an accelerator?
    - PROBE:: What do they look like?
    - PROBE:: What is their mindset?
    - PROBE:: How did these attributes contribute to your startup's work with your accelerator?
- How was your experience working with other founders in the cohort?
    - PROBE:: How did that affect your experience in participating in the accelerator?
- In your opinion, do you think accelerators are effective? Are they meeting their goals?

Accelerator environment and Startup Culture

- How do your regional resources affect your ability to reach your business goals?
    - PROBE:: What is missing in the startup ecosystem here?

Appendix C - Interview Guide: External Advisors

We want to understand how the external and internal environment of an organization affects the outcome of accelerators and startup outcomes. Ultimately, we hope this research will lead to improved practices of accelerators worldwide, along with a better experience for startup portfolios.

If possible, we would like you to be as candid about your experience to the extent you feel comfortable. These interviews are anonymous, and we will never use your real name, personal information, or company information in our report.

Background Questions

- Can you please tell us about your education and professional background?
- Can you please describe your experience advising accelerator programs?
    - PROBE:: What motivated you to work with an accelerator
    - PROBE:: How do you help the startups you work with?

Staff/Startup Attributes

- How are the people like that you work with an accelerator?
    - PROBE:: what is their background?
    - PROBE:: What do they wear,
    - PROBE:: what type of mindset
- How do these attributes contribute to the accelerator's success?

Accelerator Outcomes

- When advising accelerator startups, do you identify goals in collaboration with the accelerator?
    - PROBE:: How did you set these goals? How do you achieve these goals?
- Would you say that accelerators are achieving their goals?

Accelerator environment and Startup Culture

- What is an accelerator's role in this region?
    - PROBE:: How does the regional environment affect your ability to deliver outcomes?
- What is missing in the startup ecosystem here?
    - Probe:: What would you do differently?

Appendix D: Regional Constraints and Enablers (Dhaka Region)

Dimension	*Constraining vs. Enabling*	*1st Order Code*
Institutional	Constraining	Complex regulatory environment
		Early Development of the ecosystem
		Family perceptions of entrepreneurship are poor
		Investors need to be educated on startups more
		Lack of access to funding
		Lack of access to funding due to proximity to India
		Lack of legal Structure
		Lack of preparedness of startups
		Lack of startup Mindset
		Lack of startup talent in the region
		Lack of Technological Infrastructure
		Lack of Understanding of Accelerators' Roles
		Once you are out of the ecosystem, startups are not valued highly
		Prevalence of innovation and quality startups
		Rapid Investment in Technological Infrastructure
		Regulatory hurdles
		The role of institutional knowledge
	Enabling	Basic problems mean a lot of impact opportunity
		Business in Eastern culture is people first
		Increasing Entrepreneurship in Media
		Less competition in ecosystem
		Maturity of the ecosystem is growing
Social	Constraining	Lack of experienced founders and mentors
		Supply challenges for accelerators and incubators
	Enabling	Affordable Labor
		Interconnectivity with other ecosystems
Spatial	Constraining	Lack of access to funding due to proximity to India
		Lack of great or excellent accelerator programs in Bangladesh
		Proximity to competing ecosystems
	Enabling	Benefit of large, dense, homogeneous market for doing

		business
		certain types of investors see Bangladesh as last green market

Appendix E: Regional Constraints and Enablers (Skåne Region)

Dimension	*Constraining vs. Enabling*	*1st Order Code*
Institutional	Constraining	accelerators have proportionally large amount of burnouts due to constant underfunding
		entrepreneurs' experience is too general and not specialized
		Funding for accelerators come from one source
		limited support and understanding from private sector
		not enough capital investment for scale ups
		Startup bubble is like Harry Potter: You can't see it from the outside
		Supply challenge to get specialized accelerators
	Enabling	almost all accelerators in Sweden are fully financed by the public sector
Social	Constraining	need for more targeted accelerators
		Struggle to find proper company in local market
		Too much general support and business coaches
	Enabling	a general will to do good for region helps stakeholders adapt
		Developing Venture Capital Network
		Prevalence of networking and knowledge in region
Spatial	Constraining	Closeness of stakeholders may be too tight
		Proximity to competing ecosystems such as Copenhagen and Stockholm
	Enabling	Accelerator benefitting from the proximity to university town
		Affordability of the region compared to Berlin and Stockholm
		Benefit of Skane is that it is densely populated and small
		connectivity of ecosystem stakeholders
		ecosystem encourages entrepreneur success through grants
		Location makes city “neutral”
		Proximity and accessibility to other regions