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## The Older as Entrepreneurs: A Diversified Group—Illustrated Through Entrepreneurship in Technical Consultancy and Artistic and Literary Work

Martin Klinthäll and Elisabeth Sundin

### Introduction

Age and entrepreneurship is an expanding field both in research and politics. In politics, all over the world, it is the very young in particular that receive explicit attention in relation to unemployment. Unemployment is, however, also a fact for older people in the labor market but is considered a problem more for the individual than for society (Eurofond 2012). This is a shortsighted and superficial way of handling old age, both on the labor market and in society. All societies need competence and experience, and a labor shortage is expected in the not too distant future in

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M. Klinthäll  
Linköping University, Norrköping, Sweden

E. Sundin (✉)  
Linköping University, Linköping, Sweden

many sectors—not least in health care, care and environmental issues (Ds 2013: 8) at the same time as many societies face population ageing.

Entrepreneurship can be seen as something that is out of the ordinary, but also as an obvious means for an individual to go on working for as long and as much as she/he wants. From a more negative perspective, entrepreneurship, or rather self-employment, can be seen as a way to avoid age discrimination in organizations or as the last resort for older individuals in the market. Whether it is the positive or the negative alternative that best describes this varies for many different reasons and on different levels. The different perspectives indicate that older entrepreneurs constitute a very heterogeneous group. Sundin and Holmquist (1989) wrote in the 1980s that self-employed women had just two characteristics in common—they were women and they were self-employed—and the same statement can be applied to older people as entrepreneurs. The old category is highly diverse, both from an identity and image perspective, and encompasses many social categories. In this chapter, the variety of entrepreneurship is illustrated through entrepreneurs in two different sectors: technical consultants and those involved in artistic and literary work.

We will first discuss the key concepts of old age and entrepreneurship separately before combining them in a section on age and entrepreneurship. As both age and entrepreneurship are context-bound, we will relate the discussion to the context from which the empirical part of the article is derived—Sweden in the first years of the twenty-first century. We then present some facts and figures on older entrepreneurs in the sectors for technical consultants and artistic and literary work, in order to illustrate different aspects of age and entrepreneurship. The empirical overview of older entrepreneurs is based on register data, presented below, for the whole population of Sweden. A number of interviews were also conducted with entrepreneurs as well as with experts on entrepreneurship and on age and the labor market.

## Age and Ageism

Age as a social construction can be discussed both from a critical ageism perspective (e.g. Bytheway 2005; Riach 2009) and from a more “positive thinking” approach—the latter mainly in official documents emphasizing

the need for manpower in a long-term perspective (e.g. Cedersund et al. 2017, presenting some documents). From both perspectives there is agreement that age is an important part of identity and something that is both ascribed by others and created by the individual or the group itself. The designation “older” is not something objective or universal, not even for one individual at a particular time (Krekula 2009). Although the common understanding of age is as an ambiguous concept, it is used both in the statistics, politics and even research to mean the number of years lived. “Older” workers are sometimes defined as those aged 55 years or older (e.g. Kautonen et al. 2014) and sometimes the limit is set at 60. Retirement pension is a common threshold for being considered elderly, which is complicated by the fact that many pensioners also have income from work.

The Swedish researcher and debater Bodil Jönsson (2011) states that age and ageing have many negative connotations in Sweden, which motivates *älderism*, a Swedish version of the international concept of ageism. Ageism makes age a power system just like gender and ethnicity. These associations and also their expression are both verbal and practical (Nelson 2002; Anderson 2008). Ageism is a problem not just for individuals but also for society, from different perspectives. One is that it will be necessary in the future to retain healthy and vital individuals in working life after the official age for retirement. The Swedish system for retirement is, from some perspectives, rather complicated (Sundin 2014). The state pays a pension to every citizen. The complications arise because the starting date of the payments can be changed by the individual. The same kind of negotiation of age concerns a public pension connected to working on the market as well as pensions from the private sector, emanating from collective agreements or individual contracts. Briefly, no Swede is obliged to go on working in old age in order to survive, although there may be a feeling that it is necessary. But there are great differences between individuals and groups. The class dimensions seem to continue and even be sharper at older ages. In the political debate, the “elderly poor”—mainly women who have been working part time in low-wage occupations dominated by women, or not been working on the market at all—are used to illustrate the shortcomings of the welfare state. For a long time, the official retirement age was set at 65, which is still the default retirement age in a formal sense. Hence, there is a strong general notion

of 65 as a threshold age, when you are expected to retire, in spite of today's flexible retirement system.

## Age and Work

The importance of work done for, but also by, the elderly is often expressed by politicians. According to investigations of individuals close to retirement, a majority support the idea of increasing the labor force participation rates among elderly. Still, older individuals are found on the labor market to a lower extent than younger. The why-is-that-so questions have two lines of answers and explanations – the older do not want to work, or the older are not welcome on the labor market; that is, in the organizations. It is a common understanding that age is a negative characteristic for individuals in the labor market, that is, in the organizations where age is constructed and negotiated. Older individuals meet a lot of assumptions: they might, for example, be seen as less flexible, less productive and unwilling to learn to upgrade their obsolete knowledge. These assumptions are used as an excuse for stereotyping and discrimination (Bytheway 2005; Brough et al. 2011).

Negative attitudes to older people in working life, and how they should be countered, is a common theme. The need for so-called age management in organizations has been addressed (Kadefors and Hanse 2012). A comprehensive meta-analysis of ageism using 232 studies on attitudes towards old as well as young people (Kite et al. 2005) shows that attitudes towards the old are more negative than those towards the young, and also that older individuals are more ageist than younger. In particular, the authors found ageism against older adults when assessing stereotypic beliefs. Regarding employers' attitudes, surveys show that although many employers consider the work performance to be as good among older people as among younger, and their loyalty and reliability even better, they are still not particularly interested in older workers as employees (Barnes et al. 2009).

Age discrimination is a fact on the Swedish labor market, although often in disguise. When older individuals are interviewed about their decisions to continue working they emphasize the importance of the

attitudes and actions taken by their workmates and managers, according to Nilsson (2013) in her study from the Swedish labor market. The individual's own health, as well as that of their family members, was also of great importance. Another factor was what their partners were doing.

## Entrepreneurship and Self-Employment

Entrepreneurship has developed as a field of knowledge during the last decades partly because there is a great demand for entrepreneurship and the good things following from it. However, knowledge production is fragmented and the close connection between entrepreneurship and the labor market both at organizational and individual level is often neglected, although it is there. This connection is illustrated in this chapter as well as in our other studies on older individuals as self-employed and entrepreneurs. In this section we first present some contemporary research and standpoints concerning entrepreneurship, as a background to the following discussion on research into entrepreneurship and age. We concentrate on old age and seniors, although in practice young entrepreneurs receive more attention.

In public debate, and indeed in the research, the term entrepreneur is often used as a synonym for a self-employed business owner. However, the word entrepreneur has long been used with varying meanings (e.g. Landström et al. 2012). Researchers often take, as the point of departure, Schumpeter's (1934, 1949) thoughts and writings on the issue. He argued that entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs can be found in all contexts and organizations. This view of entrepreneurship, which emphasizes both creativity and action, is shared by many (e.g. Johannisson 2010) and we find concepts such as "intrapreneurship" (e.g. 23.1 Entrepreneur 2012), "public entrepreneurship" (e.g. Bjerke et al. 2007; Bjerke and Karlsson 2011), "social entrepreneurship" (e.g. Fayolle and Marlay 2010), "cultural entrepreneurship" (e.g. Mangset and Røysen 2009) and "public sector entrepreneurship" (e.g. Klein et al. 2010; Kovalainen and Sundin 2012). The concept of entrepreneurship has often come to be equated with the creation of a new organization, particularly a private business. Nowadays, however, a distinction is frequently made between two main

types of new entrepreneurs: those starting because they have to, so-called necessity entrepreneurs, and those who start because they discover or create business opportunities, so-called opportunity entrepreneurs (cf. Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, GEM).

The question concerning staying or leaving the market is also relevant for entrepreneurs, which is a main theme for the following empirical parts. The situation is often different for the self-employed than for employees. The decision is up to them, although it is neither easy nor without restrictions. Studies by Kautonen et al. (2014) found that entrepreneurs often wanted to leave if they could find someone to take over the enterprise. They felt deeply about the enterprise and sometimes also for their employees, the customers, or the location. Most of these reasons are social rather than economic Kautonen et al. (2014).

The reason why individuals choose entrepreneurship is a major issue in both politics and research. Entrepreneurship is highly valued, with arguments both from individual and societal perspectives. In international comparisons Sweden has often been classified as low when it comes to the proportion of entrepreneurs, but according to the Entrepreneurship Survey of the EU25 this has changed; Sweden's score is the highest. The high proportion is totally constructed by a high share of opportunity entrepreneurs (and very low on necessity entrepreneurs). Qualified information on incentives for choosing entrepreneurship is (or rather was) found in the publications from the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth.

Reasons given by new starters in Sweden (New Entrepreneurship in 2011. Table 10, page 7) are:

|                                          |       |
|------------------------------------------|-------|
| To work independently                    | 32.1% |
| To realize my ideas                      | 31.8% |
| My product is needed                     | 13.3% |
| Unemployment or anticipated unemployment | 8.3%  |
| Opportunities for good earnings          | 4.7%  |

The most frequent alternatives, to work independently and to realize ideas, are considered to be “opportunity entrepreneurship” and the unemployment alternative to be “necessity entrepreneurship.” These concepts are international, as an example used in the GEM studies (Global Entrepreneurship

Monitor, 2016), but in a Scandinavian welfare regime the concepts “push” and “pull” might be more appropriate (cf. Holmquist & Sundin).

## Age, Entrepreneurship and Self-Employment

One of the main questions concerning older entrepreneurs is whether and how they differ from entrepreneurs in other age groups; whether they have something special to offer to the market or display certain disadvantages. Do the findings from the entrepreneurship literature apply to all age groups and does age discrimination on the labor market influence entrepreneurship among seniors? Some indications can be found in the international literature which we present below.

The researchers dedicated to older entrepreneurs have, unlike other entrepreneurship researchers, related entrepreneurship to the labor market in some way. This may be, as in the case of the Older Women Learning project (OWLE) (Annichiarico and Grasso 2011) about discrimination against older people in the labor market and difficulties in getting a job when you are considered elderly (cf. Kibler and Wainwright 2011). Negative attitudes towards older people in the labor market also affect those still working, for example quit rates among older people who experience negative attitudes in their workplace (e.g. Nilsson 2013). While ageist attitudes may weaken the position of older adults in the labor market, Róin (2015) maintains that “successful aging” has become a dominant concept in science and the discourse on ageing, and that staying active in old age tends to become a moral obligation. Hence, self-employment may be a solution in the presence of ageism at the workplace, in the absence of employment alternatives and when retirement is not desirable.

Singh and DeNoble (2003) use the term “bridge employment” for people who have had a long working life, retired and then decided to return to work before they finally retire completely. Singh and DeNoble categorize older entrepreneurs according to the way that the business relates to their work in the past and to the incentive to start. There are businesses that have a direct connection with previous activities (incremental) or are completely separate from them (punctuated equilibrium). The latter may

imply a person who realizes an old dream and makes a new phase in the lifecycle possible. This group is “constrained”, in other words they have been prevented. They have explicit entrepreneurial attitudes and can often be innovative. The first group is termed “rational,” in the sense of economically rational, because they simply continue to work in order to improve their financial situation. The easiest way is to continue within the same profession. The third and final group are the “reluctant”; those who have to become self-employed for economic reasons. The nature of the business is guided by what is possible rather than by strong desires. Singh and DeNoble (2003) also touch on the question of the scope, not just its direction, and argue that many older entrepreneurs are part-timers.

Weber and Schaper (2004) refer, as do many others, to Singh and DeNoble’s categorization and link explicitly to the terminology of push and pull. Older people who experience negative attitudes and even discrimination in the labor market can be “pushed” into self-employment because no other options are available to them, especially if they have a pension that they perceive to be too small. Older entrepreneurs may also hold comparative advantages, according to Weber and Schaper, such as experience, established networks and a good financial situation.

The classification of entrepreneurs suggested by Singh and DeNoble (2003) is also useful in a Swedish context, when analyzing the relationship between age, working life and self-employment. The reluctant entrepreneur, pushed into self-employment, is a relevant description for older persons in a number of situations. As discussed above, older workers may face age discrimination in the workplace. Although employment would be preferable, an unsatisfactory or even marginalized situation at work may push older workers into self-employment. Their economic situation may also push older workers into self-employment. Research shows that older people who become unemployed have more difficulty in finding new employment, and for some people self-employment may be the only way to return to work. A third situation is when self-employment becomes a way of managing on a low pension. Although an incremental strategy may be the easiest way for the “reluctant” entrepreneur, the incremental entrepreneur would typically be a “rational”; a person who wants to prolong working life within his or her own profession. Continuing work as self-employed may be economically rational, and there is a high demand



for certain professional services, but work also provides other values, such as meaning and pleasure. Swedish data shows that qualified professional services in the fields of technology, law, accounting and auditing, health services, and so on belong to the most common activities among older entrepreneurs.<sup>1</sup> The third category, the “constrained,” is a relevant description for older entrepreneurs who start their business in a new field in order to make a living out of a personal interest or a hobby, bring about a change in society, or realize a dream in some other way.

Age and gender are of importance for labor market actions and reactions including entrepreneurship. In an international perspective, the elderly in Sweden are in the labor market to a high degree, although less so than the middle aged. This is true of both men and women. The Swedish labor market is gender segregated both in horizontal and vertical dimensions. Women, and occupations dominated by women, have lower incomes, which also has consequences in later life as it influences pensions (Statistics Sweden 2016). The gender segregation of the labor market includes self-employment and owner management (Holmquist and Sundin 2015). Five years after the official retirement age, self-employment is the dominant market relation. The Swedish entrepreneurs are also mature in an international perspective, with around 25 % of them older than 55 years of age. The choice of sector and occupation differs between age groups, in particular for men. The biggest group among middle-aged men (35–54) is housing construction while those over retirement age are engaged in farming and forestry and business-to-business (B2B) services. Women are in services, both B2B and personal services, in all age groups, although farming and forestry are also expanding noticeably for them.

## Diversity and Similarities Empirically Illustrated Through Two Sectors

### Methods

Below, we illustrate the diversity of old age entrepreneurship in Sweden by means of an empirical analysis of two different industries: technical consultancy and artistic and literary work. The quantitative section comes

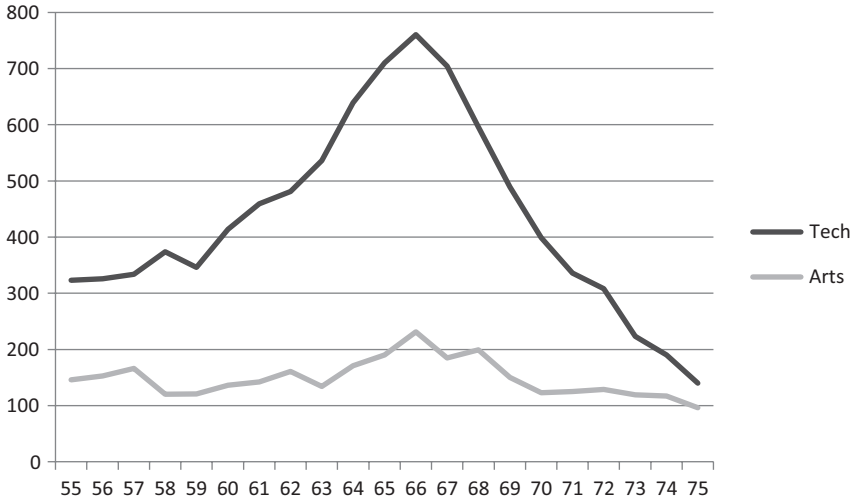
from a large database (LISA) with information compiled from Swedish administrative registers, such as population registers, tax registers, labor market and educational registers. Hence, the database contains rich socio-economic and demographic information on the total population of Sweden aged 16 and above for the period 1990–2012. Owing to reclassifications of self-employment, the study analyzes patterns of self-employment from 2004 to 2010, a period when the definition of self-employment, as defined by Statistics Sweden, is consistent from year to year. Some previous analysis results based on this information have been presented in papers, and a range of “facts and figures” is available in a commented report in Swedish (Sundin 2015).

A number of entrepreneurs and self-employed have been interviewed to give their opinions on age, work and entrepreneurship, from their personal, individual perspective, in organizations and in contemporary Sweden. The individuals have been chosen for a variety of sectors and occupations. Note that all contacted persons were very willing to share their reflections and experiences.

## Technical Consultancy and Artistic and Literary Work

Technical consultancy is the industry in Sweden displaying the largest number of self-employed individuals over 50 years of age. Artistic and literary work ranks number 15 on the list of the most common industries among old-age entrepreneurs. Figure 13.1 shows the total number of self-employed in technical consultancy and in artistic and literary work in the age groups between 55 and 75 years of age. Although the number of self-employed is smaller in artistic and literary work, this industry is different from many other industries, since self-employment is higher than regular employment in all age groups. Finding regular employment in this industry is difficult, for instance because many producers rely on freelancers. This is often discussed as a problem, as many people with educations for these sectors end up finding themselves in a constantly precarious situation, trying to make a living from short-term contracts. Despite this, new entrepreneurs enter the industry from other occupations or industries.

As technical consultancy is a larger sector than artistic and literary work, the number of self-employed individuals in technical consultancy



**Fig. 13.1** Number of self-employed persons in technical consultancy and in artistic and literary work, by age in Sweden 2010; ages 55–75

is higher for all ages, and peaks at age 66. There is a steep increase in the frequency of self-employed technical consultants from age 59 and a steep downturn after age 66. The age profile is more level in artistic and literary work. There is an increase from age 58 peaking at age 66, then a decrease until age 70, where the number of self-employed in the industry stabilizes at about the same level as before the increase started. Hence, in both industries there is a peak in the number of self-employed between ages 60 and 70. The increase before the peak is more than 100 % in technical consultancy and 70 % in artistic and literary work. Hence, in both industries there is a peak in the number of self-employed between ages 60 and 70. The increase before the peak is more than 100 % in technical consultancy and 70 % in artistic and literary work.

The two sectors have been chosen as at first glance they display very different important dimensions for entrepreneurship. For example, the demand for technical consultants is said to be high, and an education and competence in technology is a safe part of the market, while artistic and literary education have uncertain prospects and supply is much higher than demand. Consequently, entrepreneurs within the former industry, where there is a high demand for professional services, would typically

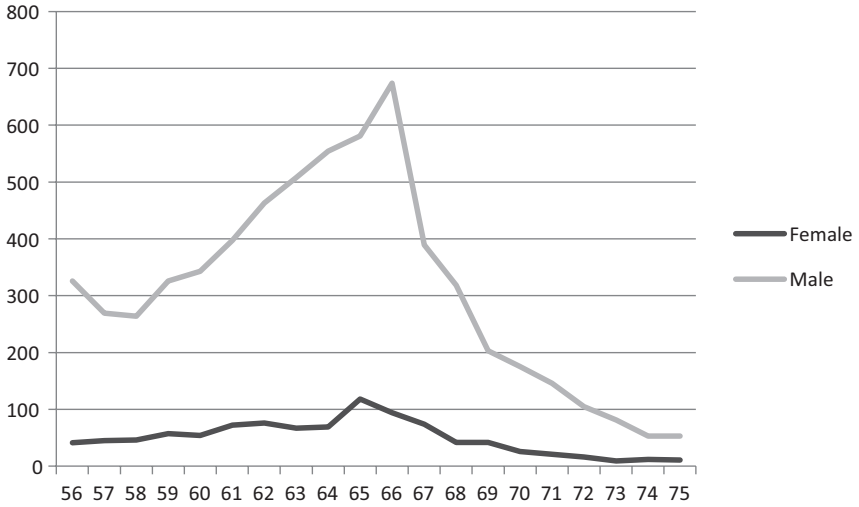
belong to the “rational” category: professionals using an incremental strategy. The latter industry contains a wide range of creative arts and other cultural activities, which is why many new entrepreneurs in the industry may be expected to belong to the “constrained” group: people who change their career in order to work with something they really enjoy and have always wanted to do.

Perhaps more interesting than the total number of self-employed of different ages is a closer look at the age differences regarding new entrepreneurs, in other words at what ages we find those who become self-employed in these two industries. Technical consultancy is a male-dominated industry. Figure 13.2 shows that there is a large difference in the number of men and women who start their own business in technical consultancy between age 55 and 75. However, there is an increase for both sexes from the late 50s to age 65 (women) and age 66 (men). The increase before the peak is as steep (more than one and a half times in eight years) for men as for women, and the decrease after age 66 (about two thirds) is also as steep for men as for women.

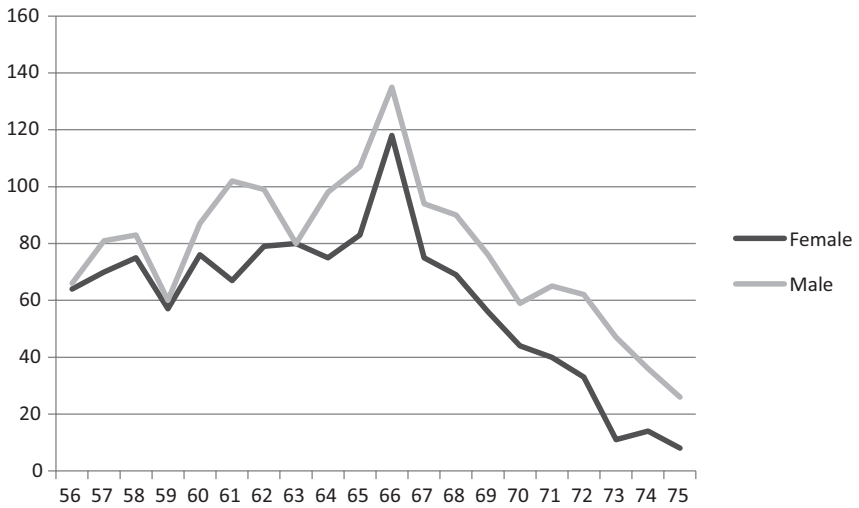
Figure 13.3 shows the difference in the number of men and women who start their own business in artistic and literary work between ages 55 and 75. Although the incidence of start-ups is higher among men than among women in this industry, the difference is much smaller than in technical consultancy. The general tendency of an increase with age until the institutionalized retirement age, where there is a peak and then a decrease, is similar in both industries.

## Where Do They Come From?

So who are these old-age entrepreneurs? Both industries seem to attract new entrepreneurs, who are approaching the age when the environment expects retirement, and people keep starting new businesses in these industries way beyond the age of 70, but at a decreasing rate. Are they “incremental” entrepreneurs who start their own business within their profession in order to prolong their working life and make some more money (“rational”), or because they have to (“reluctant”), for example because of unemployment? Or is it rather a question of “punctuated equi-



**Fig. 13.2** Number new entrepreneurs in technical consultancy by age and sex, ages 55–75, Sweden 2004–2010



**Fig. 13.3** Number new entrepreneurs in artistic and literary work, by age and sex, ages 55–75, Sweden 2004–2010

librium”: people who start a new career, perhaps in order to fulfill the dream of making money out of something they love to do (“constrained”)? A look at the former activities of the new entrepreneurs may give us a hint.

Table 13.1 indicates that, according to expectations, most new entrepreneurs in technical consultancy are “incremental,” since their activities in the previous year are in the same or similar fields of work. A quarter of those who became self-employed in technical consultancy between 2004 and 2010 came straight from employment in the same industry, while 16 % display SNI = 0, which means that they were either unemployed or retired the year before becoming self-employed (it could be that they were technical consultants—or something else—the year before that). Here we may find the “reluctant” as well as “bridge employment.” Other industries of origin supplied relatively few new entrepreneurs, since there are over 400 industries of origin in total. House construction supplied almost 3 % of the new entrepreneurs in the industry, while all other industries supplied less than 2 %. Most industries on the top ten list include work that could well be represented within technical consultancy: construction, infrastructure and planning, highly qualified university instructors, machinery specialists. From the individual’s perspective they could also be incremental. It is not unusual that the former employer is

**Table 13.1** Former industry of employment or self-employment among new entrepreneurs in technical consultancy (year before start-up). Top ten industries by number of persons becoming self-employed in technical consultancy in Sweden 2004–2010, ages 55–75

| Industry by SNI code                                | SNI code | Frequency | Percent |
|-----------------------------------------------------|----------|-----------|---------|
| 1. Technical consultancy                            | 74,202   | 1347      | 24.74   |
| 2. SNI code missing                                 | 0        | 875       | 16.07   |
| 3. Housing construction                             | 45,211   | 155       | 2.85    |
| 4. Administration of infrastructure programs        | 75,131   | 83        | 1.52    |
| 5. University education                             | 80,301   | 70        | 1.29    |
| 6. Elementary education                             | 80,102   | 68        | 1.25    |
| 7. Condominium management                           | 70,204   | 62        | 1.14    |
| 8. Road construction                                | 45,230   | 57        | 1.05    |
| 9. Machinery wholesale                              | 51,879   | 56        | 1.03    |
| 10. Overall planning at state or municipality level | 75,111   | 55        | 1.01    |

(In total 416 industries of origin. SNI Swedish index of industries; the official industry classification system in Sweden)

the biggest customer, as illustrated by Ivan, who is interviewed below. Elementary education and condominium management seem to be a little more distant from technical consultancy, although there are specialist technical teachers in elementary education, and housing management involves technical maintenance. The top ten list is dominated by industries which are clearly male labeled.

Artistic and literary work is an industry where you would expect to find the typical “constrained” entrepreneur. A look at Table 13.2 reveals that one fifth of the new entrepreneurs came from unemployment or retirement, which however could have been temporary: it is unclear. The rest of the industries represented in the top ten list came from industries related to artistic and literary work, such as education, journalism, or work in non-profit organizations. Hence, the industries represented in the list indicate that “incremental” entrepreneurship is quite common among those self-employed in artistic and literary work, more common than we expected. Also in the artistic and literary work industry, new entrepreneurs seem for the most part to be people who stay in their occupations, but continue as self-employed after having worked for public or third-sector employers. Artistic and literary work seems to constitute a field of competence and relations, the same as technical consultancy.

**Table 13.2** Former industry of employment or self-employment among new entrepreneurs in artistic and literary work (year before start-up). Top ten industries by number of persons becoming self-employed in artistic and literary work in Sweden 2004–2010, ages 55–75

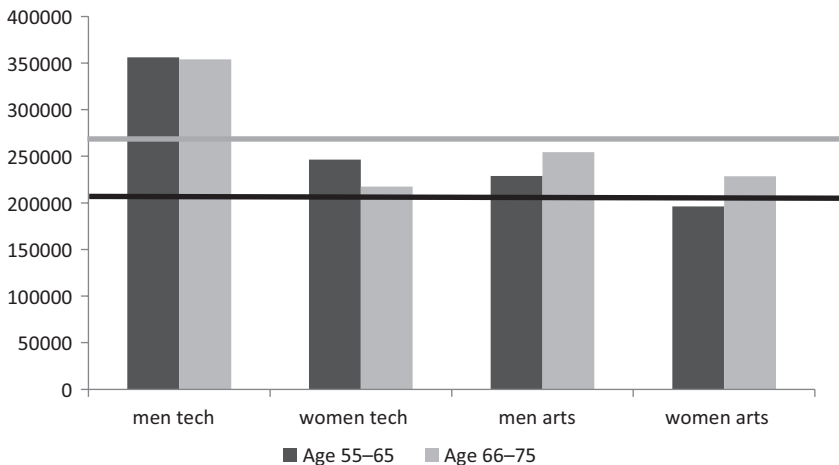
| Industry by SNI code                        | SNI    | Frequency | Percent |
|---------------------------------------------|--------|-----------|---------|
| 1. SNI code missing                         | 0      | 364       | 19.76   |
| 2. University education                     | 80,301 | 100       | 5.43    |
| 3. Artistic and literary work               | 92,310 | 98        | 5.32    |
| 4. Education in study associations and NGOs | 80,424 | 84        | 4.56    |
| 5. Elementary education                     | 80,102 | 80        | 4.34    |
| 6. Newspaper publishing                     | 22,121 | 73        | 3.96    |
| 7. Radio and TV media production            | 92,200 | 62        | 3.37    |
| 8. Other NGO activities                     | 91,330 | 61        | 3.31    |
| 9. Work in religious organizations          | 91,310 | 51        | 2.77    |
| 10. Secondary education, non-vocational     | 80,210 | 50        | 2.71    |

(In total 201 industries of origin. SNI Swedish index of industries; the official industry classification system in Sweden). NGO = non-governmental organization.

Most employers within media and journalism are private, but the sector has gone through significant rationalizations which may have pushed many journalists and media workers into self-employment (Banks and Hesmondhalgh 2009).

## Financial Situation and Outcome

Next, we will take a look at income patterns in the two industries. Looking at disposable income, that is, all sources of income net of taxes, Fig. 13.4 shows that men in technical consultancy stand out as the group with the highest incomes. Mean disposable income is over SEK 350,000 for both the 55–65 age group and the 66–75 age group. This is a high number, considering that mean disposable income for all Swedish residents aged 55–75 was SEK 209,000 in 2010 (black line in Fig. 13.4), but also when compared with all self-employed in the same ages (SEK 266,000, grey line in Fig. 13.4). Mean disposable income for women in the same age groups is only SEK 246,000 and SEK 218,000 respectively.



**Fig. 13.4** Mean disposable income, ages 55–65 and 66–75, men and women in technical consultancy and in artistic and literary work. Sweden 2004–2010 (Note: The bold black line indicates mean disposable income for all Swedish residents aged 55–75. The bold grey line indicates mean disposable income for all self-employed Swedish residents aged 55–75)



In artistic and literary work, there are also gender differences, although smaller; men in the 55–65 age group display a mean income of SEK 229,000 compared with SEK 196,000 for women in the same age group. The difference in the older age group is SEK 254,000 for men, compared with SEK 229,000 for women. The differences are in line with the gender differences in the Swedish labor market. Hence, the differences shown in Figure 13.3 are more importantly between men in technical consultancy and the other categories, between which the income differences are smaller. In artistic and literary work, mean disposable income is higher among those above retirement age, whereas the opposite is true for the self-employed in technical consultancy. However, in all groups, total disposable incomes are relatively stable before and after age 65. This indicates that continuing a professional career as a self-employed person is an important means to maintain income level after retirement—more so for men than for women. As can be seen, men in artistic and literary work have higher incomes than women in technology. We believe that this is remarkable and calls for more investigation.

Regression analyses (not presented here) show that for those moving from unemployment to self-employment, income increases are insignificant in both industries. The only category which experienced a significant income change after moving into self-employment was those who moved into self-employment in technical consultancy from employment in a different industry, and that was a negative change. Our regression analyses also show considerable income differences according to the status of the firm running a limited company is associated with significantly higher incomes compared with sole proprietorship.

## Two Cases: IT Ivan and Art Artur

As seen from the figures and tables, entrepreneurship and self-employment seem to be a continuation of working life activities. This is supported by the older entrepreneurs we interviewed. To illustrate this, we will present one man from the IT sector and another from the artistic and literary work sector.

Ivan has been in the IT sector since he graduated with a degree in technology. For many years, he was employed in various large organizations

and subsequently as a consultant for large consulting firms. He gained many valuable experiences through his work tasks and assignments. For some years, in his mid-30s, he worked on his own. Soon he found both social and professional disadvantages. The big employers offered regular further education. On his own he had to finance that himself. After some time, he therefore went back to employment with a larger company.

Some years ago, he started on his own again. "It was a feeling—I wanted to be free. I have been a manager for so many years—but in the last few years I was a project leader with a manager over me. I did not like that." The demand for freedom also included which tasks to work with: "I knew I could get orders." That conclusion comes from the fact that his former employer is his biggest customer. Marketing is therefore not necessary. The need for constant relearning he felt in his 30s is no longer there. After many years in work his knowledge base is solid. He can keep up easily with what is new. The financial situation was not an issue when he started this time. He activated his public pension and took out a private pension. Another contributing factor was that his wife was still working.

Ivan still works hard but he also plays golf with other early retirees. He has no intention of retiring fully: "It does not feel right. As long as it is fun and I get new assignments I will continue."

Artur is self-employed in arts and culture. He has been working with culture in various ways all his life. When he started work after his degree newspapers, journals, cultural institutions and so on employed individuals to work for them regularly. Through work he got to "know everyone."

He often thought of establishing himself on the market but did not let it happen until some years later, close to the official retirement age. His grown-up daughters reserved a stand for him at the Gothenburg Book Fair. Their intention was to force him to realize some of his ideas and turn them into written material. Like Ivan, he does not have to earn his living from his enterprise. He has his pension and his wife is still working. He relishes his experience and his independence, which he can use for the benefit of authors and other artists. He can create products never seen before. His customers are both individuals interested in culture and businesses in the field. The first category is something new for him; he used to be a link between the market and the producers: now he has to handle

the market himself. Being in business gives him a sense of still being part of an active life. That is important for his young wife: “It is not much fun for her to say that she is married to a retired man—but saying that she is married to an entrepreneur or a culture creator, that is different.”

## Concluding Discussion

Entrepreneurship in old age is an important phenomenon. In this chapter, we discuss entrepreneurship for those aged 55–75 and find that self-employment peaks at the age when society expects you to retire. The number of self-employed starts to increase before 60 and peaks at the institutionalized retirement age of around 65, before the number in self-employment decreases again. Around age 70, self-employment is back at about the same level as before age 60. Old age entrepreneurs are a heterogeneous group with regards to their backgrounds, identities and motivations for work. Our analysis of Sweden from 2004 to 2010 shows that people aged 55–75 who started a new business in technical consultancy or artistic and literary work used to work in a total of more than 600 different industries. In both industries studied, self-employment allows incomes to stay stable beyond age 65, and in artistic and literary work, mean incomes actually increase after age 65. However, if we look more closely at the industries of origin, many people seem to continue with work that is similar to what they did in their last job. In that sense, most of the old-age entrepreneurs seem to be “incremental,” in the sense that the business start-up does not break with their professional past. Although there are those who move into self-employment from unemployment, perhaps reluctantly out of economic necessity, for most old-age entrepreneurs in these two industries self-employment is a way to prolong working life and keep incomes from falling at retirement.

Unexpectedly, self-employment in artistic and literary work seems to be almost as incremental as in technical consultancy, an industry where professional skills and work experience is in high demand. We do not find as much “punctuated equilibrium”—breaks with the professional past—in the artistic and literary work industry as expected. This is supported by our interviews with entrepreneurs in the two fields of business. Although

the two industries are very different regarding work content and formal skills requirements, the patterns of entrepreneurship towards the end of working life are similar. To understand this pattern we have to include the individual's life outside the market. There are two starting points for this inclusion, both emanating from the Swedish welfare system and traditions. As emphasized above, all citizens receive a pension that gives at least a basic economic level. Self-employment is therefore not necessary for strictly economic reasons. The other starting point is the distribution and tradition of adult education organized by a number of organizations connected to political parties, religious associations, social movements such as "veterans in this town," and so on. Most of these organize courses in artistic and literature—both to learn about these topics or to produce something themselves. We know from studies and statistics (Kulturanalys 2016) that many seniors participate in these activities. Our point here is that they break with their professional past and both fulfill dreams and find new social arenas. From the perspective of the individual, this could be genuinely positive and good; from the perspective of the economy and society it is less so, as the experience and knowledge is taken from the market. The theoretical conclusions are that self-employment and entrepreneurship are closely connected both to other parts of the market and non-market institutions and embedded in the welfare regime.

The register data used for this study show clear differences between women and men. The differences are in line with the situation in other age groups, as we discussed with reference to our own previous findings as well as to other research. We also presented two of our interviewed persons and their considerations on their former working life and present situation as owner managers. Both of them are men. Interviewed women give, in some respects, other perspectives on age and entrepreneurship and self-employment. This is an interesting focus for coming publications.

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## Notes

1. This and other information on the Swedish situation comes from the studies made in our research program, see also under “Methods.”

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**Martin Klinthäll** is Associate professor of economic history, and his main research interests lie in the area of labor market integration. Currently he is working in research projects dealing with self-employment as a strategy for labor market inclusion; self-employment in old age, and self-employment among people with migrant backgrounds. Martin Klinthäll is Head of Division at the division for Research on Migration, Ethnicity and Society (REMESO), Linköping University, Sweden.

**Elisabeth Sundin** is Professor Emerita in Business Administration at Linköping University. Her main research interest is organizational change – in different

kind of organizations, small and big, public and private, and change of different kinds, reactive as well as active and entrepreneurial. She has published both in English and in Swedish, books and articles in different fields such as gender and entrepreneurship and reorganizations from different perspectives. She has also edited both books and special issues, including *Women Entrepreneurship and Social Capital* in 2008 (with I. Aaltio and P. Kyrö) and a special issue on gender of the *Journal of Enterprising Communities* in 2016 (with E. Ljunggren).