

PROPOSITIONS
attached to the thesis

Gendered Institutions Matter
A middle ground between feminist and gender-blind perspectives on enterprise development

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1. It is hardly surprising that businesses run by female constrained gazelles stay small and rarely grow. In addition to a poor business environment, they have to navigate the unwritten rules and expectations on what women can and cannot be, have and do at home, in the market as well as in the community and that pose constraints or risks to their entrepreneurship, market engagement, safety and well-being (this thesis).
2. Female entrepreneurs are not a homogenous group. Like the gender-neutral entrepreneur without a body, family, home or community, she does not exist. Bringing the more hidden aspects of gender-specific rules and expectations into focus, illuminates the diversity in entrepreneurial logic, the uniqueness of strategies and the differences in support needs (this thesis).
3. Female entrepreneurs' actions and interactions in the business and market are dependent on the levels of agency and control they are granted by gendered rule-systems that govern other institutional domains, particularly the household and in terms of marital status (this thesis).
4. Women's entrepreneurial logics and support needs are anything but stable or constant. Rather, they are dynamic and vary across different stages of their life cycle. The transition to a new life phase comes with a new set of gendered rules and expectations and affects female entrepreneurs' vulnerability to different types of constraints and risks. This is especially true of complications related to control over time investment, earnings, financial decision-making, and exposure to oppression and violence (this thesis).
5. Not only do female entrepreneurs use market innovations as means to develop their businesses, they may also use them to renegotiate constraining rules that come with being 'a single woman', 'a wife', 'a divorcee' or 'a widow' on who has legitimacy to act and choose and benefit from their entrepreneurship (this thesis). Hence, changes in market rules can trigger a ripple effect across interwoven domains and provide female entrepreneurs with new opportunities to enhance their agency and reconstruct the problematic situations they experience at home.
6. Adopting a middle-ground between feminist critique and gender-blind perspectives of enterprise development provides us an opportunity to embrace complexity and tease out the empirics and lexicon to gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the unique ways diverse women *do* entrepreneurship and *how* they use market means and mechanisms at their disposal in pursuit of more freedom and improved well-being (this thesis).
7. Even gender-blind market innovations for enterprise development can have emancipatory effects in lives of female entrepreneurs and serve a feminist agenda, albeit limited.

8. Improving access to finance, insurance, business skills or market linkages are not enough to support diverse female entrepreneurs in realizing their ambitions. Such enterprise development policy measures leave gendered institutional constraints and risks untouched and mismatch the strategies and support needs of diverse segments of entrepreneurs. To be meaningful to the lives and businesses of female entrepreneurs, we need inclusive, life-cycle proof and rule-guided enterprise development policies that mitigate risks and equip agents with new resources and opportunities across the market, the community as well as at home.
9. Practising empathy is a good competency of a researcher but it is not without risks to connect with the perspective and experiences of the 'other'. One must surround oneself with people who can help reflect on and suggest strategies to address such risks.
10. Female entrepreneurs are being disproportionately affected by COVID-19 as compared to male entrepreneurs. Not only because their businesses are fragile but more importantly, because being confined to staying at home, in combination with school closures, means an excessive increase of care work and more exposure to tension, conflict and violence at home.
11. Not only has COVID-19 cleared the view on the Himalayas, it has also disclosed all that is wrong with how we *do* capitalism. This crisis presents us with an opportunity to redress the exclusionary principles of our economic systems. If we do not, that would make us humans the stupidest species ever to have walked the earth.