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TAKING CONTEXT SERIOUSLY THROUGH A PHENOMENOLOGY OF PLACE: AN ILLUSTRATION OF HOME-BASED WORK

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ABSTRACT

Contextualization has received increased attention in organization and entrepreneurship studies, yet predominant assumptions remain of contexts as fixed and having objectivist effects on organizing and entrepreneurial activities, independent from local actors' perceptions. In this paper, we bring forward the phenomenology of place as a means to be reflexive about contexts and resist the epistemic coloniality in organization and entrepreneurship studies. Drawing on our work with home-based women entrepreneurs in rural Central Java, Indonesia, we illustrate how we can examine "home as a place" that is experienced and practiced, offering new insights that challenge dominant assumptions underlying the notion of home.

Keywords: Context; entrepreneurship; home; home-based work; organizing; phenomenology; place

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INTRODUCTION

Two world-views were in collision; and the poverty of white accounts of these canoe journeys reflect the colonialists' blindness to the native sea. They didn't get it – couldn't grasp the fact that for Indians the water was a place, and the great bulk of the land was undifferentiated space. (Raban, 1999, p. 103)

The above excerpt from the book *Passage to Juneau* provocatively highlights the profound divide in knowledge resulting from a colonial mindset regarding place. The native Tlingits' deep connection to water as a meaningful place is lost on the early European explorers' minds, which, driven by a capitalist and exploitative view of natural resources, were more tuned toward land as a place. This excerpt vividly illustrates the situated and subjective construction of place, in which the meanings and experiences associated with a place are shaped by social, cultural, and historical practices (Cresswell, 2004; Gieryn, 2000).

Later on in the book, the author reflects on these conflicting views and finds himself wondering how the Tlingits could be ignorant of their land surroundings (Raban, 1999). This exemplifies how perceived superiority of Western knowledge erases and devalues local ways of existence and knowing, creating a profound rift in contemporary knowledge. An emerging perspective within organization and entrepreneurship scholarship seeks to address this problem through contextualization (Bruton et al., 2022; Johns, 2006, 2017; Welter, 2011; Welter et al., 2019), notably by incorporating diverse and often unheard voices and perspectives when conducting research in non-western contexts. Yet, as Banerjee (2022) points out, our attempts for deeper contextualization fall short if “Western scholarship [remains] the norm for assessing other knowledges” (p. 1079) as it can retain the often taken-for-granted, positional superiority of Western knowledge and understandings of what “context” is (Mignolo, 2012; Said, 1993). Overcoming such epistemic violence would require us to be “critically disruptive” in conducting research, as Chrispal (2025) points out in this volume, and to welcome theories and methodologies that do not necessarily fit the knowledge that predominates organization and entrepreneurship scholarship.

In this paper, we demonstrate how incorporating “place” as an active concept and dynamic ingredient can enhance the study of organizing and entrepreneurial activities (Dacin et al., 2024; Kimmitt et al., 2024; Wright et al., 2022). We draw on the phenomenology of place (Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1974) to develop a situated approach to understanding these practices (Cartel et al., 2022). This approach enables critical reflection on the multiplicity of interpretations of place (Dovey, 2016) and disrupts dominant, often simplified narratives (Jammulamadaka et al., 2021). We advocate for appreciating place as experienced, dynamic, and socially constructed rather than a fixed “context” (Dacin et al., 2024). Given the historical grounding of organization and entrepreneurship studies in Western ideals (Bruton et al., 2018; 2022; Jammulamadaka et al., 2021), a place-sensitive approach unveils marginalized perspectives and resists the epistemic coloniality that prioritizes Western knowledge in determining what is “interesting” and “worthy” of exploration (Weston & Imas, 2018). As James et al. (2025) critically argue, developing

a situated understanding of place based on local ways of knowing, being, and doing is key to decolonizing organization and entrepreneurship research.

Against this backdrop, we argue in this paper that approaching place as an experience and practice (Cartel et al., 2022) through the phenomenology of place perspective allows for more critical modes of contextualization, reflection, and theorization on local forms of engagement and lived experiences (Wright et al., 2023). We do so by drawing on our experiences of, and reflections around, our engagement with home-based women entrepreneurs in rural villages in Central Java, Indonesia.

RESISTING COLONIZATION THROUGH THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF PLACE

The concept of place has gained significance in the field of organization and entrepreneurship studies, as it explores how the meanings attached to various places such as offices (e.g., Alexandersson & Kalonaityte, 2018) and communities (e.g., Cnossen, 2023) impact organizational actors (Kibler et al., 2015; Welter & Baker, 2021; Wright et al., 2022). There are multiple definitions and perspectives on place, which are rooted in disciplines such as human and cultural geography, sociology, and philosophies of meaning (see, for instance, Cresswell, 2004 or Gieryn, 2000 for a short review). In this discussion, we primarily take inspiration from the work by Cartel et al. (2022) and Dacin et al. (2024) and draw on the phenomenology of place (Relph, 1976).

Relph's (1976) approach emphasizes the embodied, experiential nature of place and the importance of understanding individuals' emotional connection to it. Place is defined here as "a unique location (either geographical or digital), endowed with material form (either crafted by nature or by humans) and a socially constructed set of meanings" (Cartel et al., 2022, p. 351). Place is, therefore, not just a physical context or object but rather a complex and dynamic interplay of meanings, emotions, and experiences closely tied to that specific location (Dacin et al., 2024). This is contrary to the view that place might be a static container, an existing and stable context "out there" and independent from the individual, with an "objective" effect on organizing and entrepreneurial actions (Johns, 2006, 2017). Such a static view has been increasingly criticized as it disregards the active role of individuals in making sense of their contexts and responding toward them (Welter, 2011). In this light, simply diversifying our research contexts to decolonize hegemonic theories is insufficient; it is also crucial to comprehend how various local actors develop specific meanings within and about a particular place (Mellor, 2022). As illustrated in the opening excerpt above, what may be a significant place for one group in terms of organizing might be deemed irrelevant or even disputed by others. It is crucial that we recognize the agency of individuals and groups in relation to places rather than treating them as passive victims of their surroundings (Dacin et al., 2024).

Adopting a phenomenological perspective on place prompts us to move beyond the stability of contexts and their effects, delving into the important question of "what makes a place a place?" (Cresswell, 2004, p. 27). Drawing on Cartel et al. (2022), we present two ontologies of place for place-sensitive research. The first is place as an experience, focusing on the "subjective and emotional attachment that

people develop in relation to a place” (Cartel et al., 2022, p. 354). A sense of place develops through “every aspect of individuals’ life experience” and “pervades everyday life and experience” (Rose, 1995, p. 88). The second ontology is placed as a practice, understanding that place is performed and produced by everyday activities (Cresswell, 2004). Research on place as practice focuses on the physical and social actions through which people shape a place, known as “place-making.” These actions range from maintaining and preserving the existing meanings of a place through rituals and traditions (Dacin et al., 2010) to creating new meanings and identities by influencing its physical features and social interactions (Kibler & Muñoz, 2020).

In reference to the opening excerpt on the Tlingits and the colonialists on the sea, experience and practice in this context are multifaceted, encompassing sensory, emotional, intellectual, and even spiritual dimensions (Gilmore & Kenny, 2015). While the colonialists may undergo similar sensory experiences when engaging in the same activities as the Tlingits in the river, the more abstract aspects of their experience, including emotional, social, and psychological elements, may diverge due to their unique identities and sociohistorical backgrounds (Mohanty, 1988). Therefore, the same place can hold distinct meanings for different individuals, leading to contested interpretations (Dacin et al., 2024).

The challenge we face as organization and entrepreneurship scholars is to explore how we can effectively capture the experiences and practices related to the places that our respondents engage with. One of the critical issues in decolonializing organization and entrepreneurship studies is whether we, as scholars, should assume an “authoritative stance” when presenting the viewpoints of the respondents in our interpretative works (Alcoff, 1992). The Global North (colonialist) perspectives have historically dominated theory and praxis, establishing analytical categories and strategies that revolve around its own understandings (Banerjee, 2022; Jammulamadaka et al., 2021; Welter et al., 2017), which has often led to viewing those in the Global South as homogeneous. However, based on our experience examining home as a place with home-based self-employed workers in Indonesia, we have come to recognize that the issue is not only about us assuming authority over the data and interpretation (Alcoff, 1992; Mohanty, 1988) but also the quest for “objectivity” by maintaining a neutral stance in research. To avoid this pitfall, we argue for conscious subjectivity when approaching place as experience and practice, whereby researchers try to be continuously aware of their own identities and personal histories (Manning, 2018). This heightened awareness can be nurtured through ongoing and dialectical discussions, conducted both individually and collaboratively among co-authors (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998) to surface any tensions and disparities in the understanding of meanings, practices, and experiences related to place in our interactions with respondents and within the research team.

THE SITUATED MEANING OF HOME AND HOME-BASED WORK: AN EMPIRICAL ILLUSTRATION

Home-based work can be broadly understood as “economic activity by members of households who produce within their place of residence commodities for

exchange in the market” (Felstead & Jewson, 1999, p. 15). The recent COVID-19 pandemic has brought renewed attention to research on home-based work, as many individuals globally were required to transition from office spaces and other designated work areas to conduct their work from their homes. Two perspectives commonly arise when discussing home-based work: one that emphasizes the challenges stemming from a “context” with blurred boundaries between work and personal life (Delanoeije et al., 2019; Tietze & Musson, 2005) and another that views it as a liberating and empowering “context”, offering opportunities to have the best of both worlds (Al-Dajani & Marlow, 2010; Kwaramba et al., 2012). These discussions often touch upon topics such as productivity (Kwaramba et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2021), work-life balance (Blyton et al., 2006; Gherardi, 2015), work-family interface (Hunter et al., 2019; Kreiner et al., 2009), physical space transformations (Goodwin et al., 2023; Halford, 2005), identity (Brocklehurst, 2001; Di Domenico, 2008), and well-being (Prugl & Tinker, 1997; Standen et al., 1999). Yet, a review of home-based work literature suggested that “home” is still primarily defined in terms of its physical space and structures (Tietze et al., 2009) as the alternative to office. What defines home as a place inscribed with personal meanings (Easthope, 2004; Wise, 2000) and sets it apart from other locations where work can be conducted remains an important question, especially for both contextualizing and understanding the unique experiences of home-based workers.

Several assumptions underlie existing literature on home-based work in organization and entrepreneurship studies that can benefit from greater scrutiny. First is the notion of home as a safe and perhaps neutral place. Indeed, early place scholars have often brought about home as the ideal place, associated with positive meanings, attachment, and a sense of belonging (Easthope, 2004; Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1974). However, feminist scholars have criticized such views and argued that home could also be a place of oppression and resistance (Boeri, 2018; Prentice, 2017; Prugl & Tinker, 1997). This is particularly relevant for women who often experience power asymmetry and are subordinated within their homes and who are traditionally the sole bearers of domestic and care work (Kwaramba et al., 2012; Morgan & Winkler, 2020).

Furthermore, the neutrality of home implies a clear distinction between work and non-work, with the home traditionally reserved for non-work activities. As a result, conducting work in one’s home would be perceived as a violation of this sacred place. This and other binaries that prevail in discussions around home-based work (e.g., public/private, work/life, work/family) underscore separate yet interconnected domains within the home. Together with the notion of a standardized work schedule (e.g., 9-to-5 working hours), they are rooted in the Industrial Revolution and the emergence of industrial capitalism (Hardill & Green, 2003; Tietze & Musson, 2005). However, this model disregards the diversity of existing work schedules and operations. For instance, agricultural workers’ schedules are shaped by seasons, weather conditions, and daily contingencies; informal businesses often operate according to irregular supply/demand and schedule. Despite this, the traditional model of work remains the benchmark against which work activities, including home-based work, are measured.

Moreover, there is a clear distinction between paid and unpaid work in the Global North literature based on the capitalist assumption that every activity has monetary value. Care work in households holds economic value for producing future labor power for capitalism (Bakker, 2007). However, this type of work is undervalued due to the pervasive gendered division of labor at home, causing women to persist in providing such work without compensation (Dowling, 2016). In the Global North, some degree of progress has been made toward the feminist agenda of compensating certain forms of care work, exemplified by initiatives like public childcare provision. This initiative facilitates women in selling their labor to the highest bidder, enabling them to participate in paid work either at home or outside, free from interruptions (Prugl & Tinker, 1997). However, the absence of childcare privilege in the Global South positions women as victims of asymmetrical power relations at home (Boeri, 2018; Morgan & Winkler, 2020), overshadowing the structural nature of the issue. This perception arises as women continue to provide unpaid social reproductive labor (Al-Dajani & Marlow, 2010; Kwaramba et al., 2012), acting as a barrier to their realization of their full productive potential.

These taken-for-granted assumptions could become problematic when taken at face value and applied to understanding home-based work in diverse contexts and cultures. They can inadvertently perpetuate Western-centric perspectives, neglecting the nuanced experiences and meanings of “home as a place.” Furthermore, they fail to acknowledge the gendered nature of home and the power structures that exist in and around home. The sociocultural influences that shape the experience and practice of home and work are also disregarded. Rather than acknowledging the diversity of experiences and practices around home, there is an assumption of homogeneity where the home is depicted as neutral.

To illustrate and unpack the complexity of home as a place, we now turn toward the exploration of the lived experiences and practices of self-employed women engaged in home-based entrepreneurial work in rural Indonesia. Rather than a comprehensive decolonizing study, our aim is to offer a glimpse of how an approach informed by phenomenology of place can be applied to the concept of home and home-based work.

Research Context: Home and Home-Based Work in Rural Indonesia

The interplay of religion, ethnicity, and social class shapes the economic involvement of women in Indonesia, setting this country apart from other Islamic contexts. Indonesia, with the world’s largest Muslim population, is not an Islamic state; instead, it embraces Pancasila as its ideological foundation, which celebrates religious and cultural diversity within a democratic framework (Oktaviani et al., 2021). Adding to this rich tapestry, the Islamic teachings and perspectives on gender roles are diverse (Qibtiyah, 2018). The majority of Indonesian Muslims, including the women in this study, affiliate with moderate Islam. Moderate Islam approaches gender relationships within households as equal and complementary (Rinaldo, 2019). As demonstrated by Wahyuni and Wafiroh (2013), moderate Islamic teaching views men and women as equal in the eyes of God, but their

distinct biological characteristics define their roles and responsibilities. Men are seen as leaders and providers, while women follow their husbands' leadership and oversee household and childcare duties. Importantly, these distinctions are not meant to imply one gender has more power than the other. Instead, they underscore the mutual responsibility of both parties to fulfill each other's roles in times of need. Hence, in the face of financial challenges, it is considered perfectly acceptable for women to engage in economic activities to support their husbands in providing for the family.

The dynamics of women's economic engagement also exhibit intriguing variations within the intricate social hierarchy of Javanese ethnicity. Studies by [Brenner \(1991\)](#) and [Smith-Hefner \(2007\)](#) demonstrate that historically, economic activities within the household have been prevalent among Javanese noblewomen but relatively absent among their counterparts from lower social strata. The Javanese upper-class women have been traditionally admired for being submissive and dependent on men. Even when some of them engage in crafting traditional batik within the confines of their homes, the selling of batik is typically delegated to someone else who takes their products to the market. On the other hand, these studies ([Brenner, 1991](#); [Smith-Hefner, 2007](#)) document that Javanese women from the lower social class are esteemed for their productivity and financial independence. It is furthermore crucial to acknowledge that the colonial era played a significant role in influencing the circumstances of young, unmarried Javanese girls from all social classes. They were often confined to their homes until marriage, a practice intended to protect them from potential abuse and unwanted relations with Dutch colonialists ([Suhandjati & Kusuma, 2018](#)). However, following marriage, women from the lower social class actively engage in various economic pursuits in the marketplace ([Smith-Hefner, 2007](#)), further illustrating the complex interplay of class, tradition, and historical influences on women's economic roles in this region.

Thus, it comes as no surprise that a considerable number of lower-social-class Muslim Javanese women are actively engaged in economic endeavors in both the informal and formal sectors ([Suhandjati & Kusuma, 2018](#)). Some venture to larger cities and foreign countries, taking up roles as domestic laborers (i.e., maids, babysitters, nannies, and carers for the elderly or disabled) in pursuit of higher income to support their families. Nevertheless, a discernible trend has arisen where more women opt for home-based work. This trend can be partially attributed to national labor regulations that, regrettably, offer little support for women who aspire to maintain their presence in the job market following marriage and motherhood ([Schaner & Das, 2016](#)). Furthermore, people increasingly turn to religious teachings as guiding principles in determining one's roles and responsibilities ([Rinaldo, 2008](#)). As such, women who uphold moderate Islamic teachings tend to prioritize their roles as wives and mothers above all else, including economic pursuits, in an earnest effort to align their lives with their faith ([Rinaldo, 2019](#); [Sakai, 2019](#); [Sakai & Fauzia, 2016](#)). Adhering to these religious teachings shields them from societal stigmatization, but it prevents them from being perceived as disrespecting their husband by taking over his provider role and for neglecting their caretaking responsibilities ([Parker & Creese, 2016](#); [Rinaldo, 2019](#)). Hence, home-based work emerges as a pragmatic solution for many lower

social-class Javanese women. Working from home allows them to outwardly uphold the existing dynamics of marital relationships while discreetly engaging in economic activities that, though not entirely conforming to societal expectations, do not pose a substantial challenge to the established order (Ginting-Carlström & Chliova, 2022).

Method

Our data was generated as part of two research projects that have been carried out by the authors. The first and third authors have been involved in a study of around 31 self-employed women who had formerly worked as domestic laborers, with the aim of studying narrative identity construction. The second and fourth authors have studied 34 women micro-business owners in rural Islamic communities to understand power and discourse dynamics in entrepreneurship. Hence, the first and second author, who are both Indonesians, have interviewed collectively a total of 65 self-employed women whose micro-businesses involved one or more of the following: selling cooked food (32 women), groceries (14 women), clothes (7 women) and other household goods (5 women); providing services such as tailoring and laundry (6 women); and producing food and crafts (12 women). The interviews were focused on their stories and experiences as women entrepreneurs in rural Indonesia. While the projects were separate, both projects were undertaken in neighboring villages in the same region in Central Java. The demographic profile of these villages exhibits striking similarities, with the majority of the population identifying as Muslims of Javanese ethnicity. Additionally, a significant portion of the residents falls within the lower socioeconomic class, primarily attributable to the economic challenges stemming from the declining rural economy. Other than self-employment, formal work opportunities tend to lie beyond the village boundaries, often requiring migration to larger cities or even abroad.

The word home in Bahasa Indonesia is “rumah.” While in the English language, there is a different word for the building one resides in (“house”) and the more personal “home,” in Bahasa Indonesia, the word *rumah* is used to refer to both. The word *rumah* is also used in relation to experiences and practices beyond the physical space of one’s dwelling place. Beyond the differences in terms, we observe the diverse ways that we, as researchers, can understand home as experience and practice among women home-based workers. We found certain practices and experiences profoundly familiar, while others were more bewildering or unfamiliar. We, therefore, acknowledge that our preconceptions and personal history with home and work can affect our interpretation process, which prompted the more expanded reflection in this paper.

Each of the co-authors resided outside their home country for the duration of the study, having established permanent residence in a new country with their own multicultural families. Notably, the first and second authors, both Indonesian women, spent a significant portion of their formative years outside their home country, which has led to the development of a distinct cultural identity influenced by their cross-cultural upbringing. The third author,

a man, and the fourth author, a woman, are of European origin and educational backgrounds. Due to our diverse backgrounds, the concept of “home” holds a multifaceted meaning for us. For all of us, “home” is primarily tied to people rather than a physical location or structure. In the past, it revolved around our parents and siblings, and now, it is linked to our nuclear family. Nevertheless, the house and the country where our parents once lived still evoke a strong sense of home, a place we yearn to return to. Our personal attachment to home, particularly the people within it, significantly influences our perspective on working from home. Having experienced the conventional office environment with set working hours, we recognize the importance of maintaining a separation between work and home, even when working from home. We have designated a specific office space within our homes and adhere to a work schedule, albeit with the flexibility to attend to domestic and caregiving responsibilities. However, we acknowledge the challenging nature of preserving clear boundaries between work and home as the two inevitably intersect. Based on this, we continuously acknowledge our own multifaceted and fluid understanding of home and home-based work as we delve into the two ontologies of place, that of experience and that of practice.

Experiencing a Sense of Home

To delve deeper into the multiplicity of meanings around *rumah*, we revisited our interview transcripts to explore how our research participants constructed narratives surrounding their home. Recognizing that one’s sense of home is intricately woven from personal experiences within and related to the home (Easthope, 2004; Hultin et al., 2022; Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1974), we aimed to uncover what *rumah* signifies for our participants. We delved into the aspects that contribute to their sense of belonging and attachment, or conversely, their sense of detachment from *rumah*. This encompassed a closer examination of what *rumah* represents to them, as well as what it does not. We probed into the tangible (e.g., material objects, household members) and intangible elements (e.g., relationships, emotions) that collectively shape their unique interpretation of *rumah*. To accomplish this, our approach involved an initial search for sentences containing the term “rumah.” Furthermore, we paid attention to the word “pulang,” which means “to go or return home.” This word offers a poignant insight into their perception of where or what they identify as their return destination, thus revealing the essence of their concept of “home.”

Drawing on the analysis, we observed diverse and fluid meanings surrounding *rumah* in this context. While the notion is used to refer to one’s house or physical dwelling, *rumah* is also widely used to refer to one’s village of origin, regardless of their physical location in the present. This double meaning is especially prevalent among women who have migrated to larger cities or abroad, who consider their *rumah* to be their home village even though they have lived away for a long period of time. Interestingly, we find that the women still consider their *rumah* to be their home village even when they are living with their husbands and, for some, with their young children in a different village or bigger cities. In other words, *rumah*

is intertwined with the village where they were born or raised up in rather than where their nuclear family is located, as exemplified in Vignette 1 below:

Vignette 1. 40-year-old Wati (pseudonym) had her first work experience when she was 15, right after she graduated from middle school. She went to work as a maid in Jakarta for a year before quitting and going back (*pulang*) to her village. She was at home (*rumah*) for about five months when she got married, and afterwards she continues being at home (*rumah*). When her first child was one year old, they moved together with her husband to Jakarta. Her husband worked, but his income was not enough to cover their living expenses, so Wati went around the neighborhood selling homemade Javanese salad, all while carrying her child along with her. When her child was about to enter elementary school, Wati told her husband she was going to her home village (*rumah*) to stay there while taking care of their child. Upon her return, she was wondering what she would do at home (*rumah*), as it was impossible to work at a factory with her child being so young. She then worked as a tea harvester for a tea plantation in the village, which she considered as working from home (*kerja di rumah*). When she was pregnant with her second child, Wati quit her tea harvesting job because it would be difficult to look after her newborn. Meanwhile, her parents were too old to look after the baby, and her husband still worked outside of the village. Wati then decided to open a small food stall at home (*rumah*).

For many of the women, *rumah* also encompasses a feeling of safety and security. Like Wati, they would mention that despite the challenges of living in a rural village, such as limited income-generating opportunities and the lack of fulfilling activities, at least they are at home (*rumah*). The women strive to maintain this sense of safety and security by seeking or creating productive activities around the house. In Wati's case, even though her work in the tea plantation is situated outside her physical dwelling place and requires significant effort to reach, she still regards it as working from home due to her perception of the village as her *rumah*. The majority of the women, however, create productive activities within the bounds of their dwelling place by establishing businesses inside their houses.

Interestingly, the view of *rumah* being invaded or violated due to the work activities carried out in and around the place did not emerge in our interactions with the participants. Instead, the women often express concern about being idle at home as they feel the need to maximize use of their time at home, as Vignette 2 below shows:

Vignette 2. Sri (pseudonym), a mother of two, lovingly cares for her preschooler and middle-schooler. While tending to her children, she has a longstanding tradition of frying tea leaves alongside her widowed grandmother. They use tea leaves from their garden and sometimes acquire additional leaves from neighbors, later selling the tea to the village cooperative. Their two houses, attached to each other, serve as the heart of this endeavor, where they prepare the tea in the grandmother's kitchen. Her widowed sister occasionally watches over the younger child. Meals are shared with her husband and elder child, showing self-sufficiency in preparing their own food when she has not cooked. In the evening, after prayers, Sri serves her family tea, signaling the end of her workday. However, she often finds herself with idle time, her children being well-behaved. This idle time troubles her, and she desires to make better use of it. Her husband suggested opening a market stall, but she hesitated due to their young child. Instead,

she launched a home-based online snack business. She produces, packages, and personally delivers the snacks to customers. Sri strives to maintain a balance between her roles as a wife, parent, and worker through effective time management. She is ready to pause work whenever her child needs her, ensuring that both responsibilities are met.

The desire to “do something” was still prevalent despite the time and energy they already spent on caring responsibilities and, as in Sri’s case, existing business activities. Rather than home being a place where one can relax and unwind, it is viewed as a place to be industrious and useful. With work being the solution for optimizing their time use at home, the women do not view income-generating work and care work as contradictory or mutually exclusive. The women’s view toward working at home, therefore, suggests that work is not an infringement on the sanctity of the home (Methot & LePine, 2016).

Making and Shaping a Home

One’s experiences and engagement with home as a place are deeply intertwined – our sense of home informs how we enact it, and in turn, our physical and social engagement with home as a place shape the meanings we construct around it (Cartel et al., 2022). In the present section, our focus shifts from understanding the multiplicity of meanings around the notion of *rumah* to exploring how home-based women entrepreneurs in our research context create, maintain, and/or disrupt the meanings of *rumah* through mundane, everyday actions and interactions (Hultin et al., 2022). We, therefore, went back to our interview materials and focused on the narrations of their daily activities in and around *rumah*, paying attention to how they engage with and shape the physical and social aspects of their homes.

We observed several similarities across the everyday activities of the women in our context. We offer a glimpse of a typical day through Vignette 3 below, which describes the activities of Retno (pseudonym), who produces an array of traditional Indonesian cakes:

Vignette 3. Retno’s day starts early, waking up at 4 am to prepare the dough and ingredients for traditional cakes. At dawn, Retno does the Fajr prayer, and afterward, she starts steaming the cakes and frying the spring rolls. Her oldest child would be awake by then and help Retno before going to school. The food for sale will be ready at around 6 am, they just need to be packed. Retno’s younger child usually wakes up around that time and she would ask Retno to bathe and dress her. The oldest one can already do things herself, but the youngest still needs help. Retno would comb her youngest child’s hair, veil her with hijab, and prepare her bag for school. Then, she packs the food to sell while waiting for school time. After dropping off her youngest at elementary school – the eldest goes by herself as they’re in middle school – Retno returns home around 7 am to pick up the packed food and take it to the store. Once done, she heads back home to prepare food for the family before prepping for the next day: she cuts the vegetables for filling the spring rolls, prepares brownies – it depends on what she plans to sell. She then fries the vegetables and filling for the spring rolls at night. Still, she cannot prepare everything in advance as some ingredients are better prepared fresh in the morning than keeping it in the fridge overnight.

The above vignette exemplifies what is common across the practices, namely that there is an absence of a clear spatial divide between work and non-work areas within their *rumah*. In the case of Retno, her kitchen serves as a space for both domestic cooking for her family and for food preparation for sale. This blurring of boundaries between work and non-work areas reflects the interconnect- edness of domestic and economic activities in her daily routine. This common space also allows her to transition seamlessly between different roles: from being a mother to a cook to a businesswoman. Boundaries between these roles remain porous and are enacted in a continuous flow. The involvement of children and, at times, husbands in the business operations also occurs organically, and it becomes part of the family's routine.

Another interesting finding is how religion shapes the concept of time and, consequently, influences the daily operations in and around *rumah*. This is further exemplified in the following Vignette 4 about Yuni:

Vignette 4. Yuni wakes up at three in the morning, and the first thing she does is, of course, pray. At around 3.30 am, she starts her work in the kitchen until it is time to prepare her child for school. By 8 am, she has finished bathing her child and they go to school together. While Yuni's husband leaves for work around 8.30 am, their child is at school until 10, so Yuni takes care of the house during this time: cooking, cleaning, doing the dishes, sweeping the floor – but sometimes all of this is done after her child returns from school. Around Dhuhr (midday prayer time), her husband returns home. *Alhamdulillah* [praise be to God], everything is taken care of by then, and Yuni takes care of her husband, prepares his meal, and then rests until late afternoon. Then Yuni fries the food that her husband will later sell around the neighborhood. Once the food for selling is ready, Yuni takes her child to the *mushola* [prayer hall] for Quran lessons. They do the Maghrib (after sunset) prayer at the *mushola*, and the child continues with learning to read the Quran until it is time for Isha (nighttime) prayer. Yuni then takes her child home before shopping for groceries. Later, she starts preparing the ingredients for the next day, so in the morning, she only needs to put them together and cook. Yuni and her husband are planning to enroll their child in a school that goes until late afternoon, which includes basic education and Quranic studies. Maybe then Yuni will have more time to work on her business, as her child will return home later in the day.

Yuni's daily routine illustrates the interplay between work, care responsibilities, and the observance of Islamic religious practices. As shown in Vignettes 2, 3, and 4, there are two ways in which the women refer to time: the normal 12-hour time and the Islamic prayer time (i.e., Fajr, Dhuhr, Maghrib, Isha), which is determined by the position of the sun. As illustrated by Yuni (Vignette 4), 12-hour time is used for formal activities outside of the house that do not directly involve them, such as time-related to the husband's work and the children's school. In contrast, they synchronize their personal activities with Islamic prayer times. The standardized "9-to-5 work schedule" therefore does not apply to these women, not simply because of juggling between work and domestic responsibilities (Hilbrecht et al., 2008), but because of aligning their daily schedules with religious obligations. This demonstrates how the local cultural and religious understanding of temporality shapes how *rumah* is enacted in everyday life.

DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

In this paper, we have argued that there are taken-for-granted assumptions around context that need to be further problematized to foster decolonial thinking in organization and entrepreneurship studies. This becomes particularly important as the interest in diversifying research sites and examining “underexplored” contexts in the Global South is growing (Bruton et al., 2018, 2022) and because the promise of expanding existing knowledge will not be accomplished unless we can really shed some of the dominant assumptions in our research (Banerjee, 2022; Jammulamadaka et al., 2021; Welter, 2011). To counter prevailing views of contexts as pre-existing and static, we have proposed a phenomenology of place (Relph, 1976), which values reflexive, pluralist, and intersubjective understandings of place. By regarding place as both an experience and a practice, researchers are able to delve even deeper into the complex and dynamic meanings individuals construct in and around places, as well as the myriad ways they create, maintain, and/or disrupt place in their everyday lives (Cartel et al., 2022; Dacin et al., 2024). This approach shifts the focus away from an authoritative stance (Alcoff, 1992) and toward experienced and grounded understandings of “contexts” in organization and entrepreneurship studies (James et al., 2025; Weston & Imas, 2018).

Through the empirical example of “home as a place” for home-based women entrepreneurs in rural Indonesia, we illustrate how the phenomenology of place can be used as a methodological approach for resisting colonialization. By unpacking the experiences and practices around *rumah*, we shed light on the multifaceted nature of home and home-based work and offer several insights that inform existing literature on these concepts in organization and entrepreneurship studies. Our examples illustrate that the work-family distinction, often referenced in numerous studies on home-based work (Boeri, 2018; Hunter et al., 2019; Kreiner et al., 2009; Morgan & Winkler, 2020), where work and family are portrayed as contradictory or opposing, might be irrelevant in many sociocultural contexts. We demonstrate this, particularly in relation to the dynamics of home-based entrepreneurial work (Wainwright & Kibler, 2014), a topic that remains under-researched in the field of entrepreneurship. While we could reduce “place” to mere “context” in our theorizing, we argue that these examples actually confirm prior research on the blurring of work and family in home-based work, perpetuating dichotomies such as work-life balance (Blyton et al., 2006; Gherardi, 2015) and the work-family interface (Boeri, 2018; Hunter et al., 2019; Kreiner et al., 2009; Morgan & Winkler, 2020). However, a place-sensitive approach encourages us to view home beyond its role as a mere dwelling place, instead considering it as an experience and a practice (Cartel et al., 2022).

If we are to be sensitive to the phenomenology of place, then we must question whether the typical emphasis on work versus family, even when blurred, truly captures the essence of home-based work in this particular sociocultural context. The expansion of boundaries implies that more social relationships are at play within a “home,” including the often-cited marital and parent-child relationships (Gherardi, 2015; Hunter et al., 2019; Kreiner et al., 2009), but also encompassing extended family and members of the community. Home is, therefore, a place where

multiple roles intersect and are performed. In our research context, these roles go beyond traditional labels such as wife, mother, or worker to include identities as active community members and devout Muslims. This expanded understanding of home-based work challenges dominant Western notions of work versus family, highlighting the importance of cultural, social, and religious contexts in shaping the experiences and practices of home-based work.

In closing, we want to share our critical reflections on the entire research journey and our efforts to bring a decolonial perspective into organization and entrepreneurship studies through a phenomenology of place. It is important to note that our intent to decolonize mainstream ideas about home and home-based work emerged *after* we had completed the data collection phase. We recognize that this sequence is far from ideal, as decolonial thinking should ideally be woven throughout the research process (Weston & Imas, 2018). This means involving local stakeholders in shaping data collection methodologies and co-creating knowledge in the interpretation phase (Manning, 2018; Mellor, 2022). Unfortunately, we were unable to do this. However, it is worth highlighting that many researchers face similar challenges. Whether it is a gradual realization of the need to decolonize our perspectives or the practical limitations, such as funding, community accessibility, or personal mobility, these challenges can sometimes hinder the full application of decolonial research methods.

In light of this, we believe that it is crucial to create space not only for research that fully embraces decolonial research design (Chrispal, 2025; Manning, 2018; Mellor, 2022; Weston & Imas, 2018) but also for research that operates within traditional research designs yet applies decolonial interpretations and frameworks. This is precisely what we have aimed to illustrate in this paper as we analyzed data generated through conventional qualitative interviews and thereafter used a combination of a place-sensitive approach and reflective, conscious subjectivity during the interpretation and theorizing phase. This approach has allowed us to perceive home-based work in new and insightful ways. We have witnessed how our understanding has evolved from our initial analysis to the present, enabling us to better contextualize our findings and develop new insights.

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