

Exploring processual and critical avenues at the crossroad of entrepreneurship and project management

Entrepreneurship and project management share lots of assumptions, concepts and practices even though they seem to relatively ignore each other as disciplines. Performing a project or a venture is a matter of time and duration: both disciplines seem concerned with the imperative of deadlines and the move from project to operations, but both also face the challenge of reconsidering their object as an ongoing phenomena in a more processual way (Hjorth *et al.*, 2015; Sergi, 2012). Project management and entrepreneurship are also rooted in some strong mythological assumptions that should be challenged about the intentionality and the agentivity of the entrepreneur/project manager even though both fields increasingly highlight the significance of social contexts and collective forms of action. Both fields also face some stimulating challenges about unfolding the range of epistemological assumptions beyond a functionalist-positivist paradigm which over-estimated the place of tools, rational action and efficiency (Konstantinou and Müller, 2016). Making a project or a venture happen is about organizing the creation process of novelty, experiencing the ordinariness of practices and elaborating consistent narratives (Blomquist *et al.*, 2010; Drouin *et al.*, 2013).

This special section explores processual and critical research avenues and considers opportunities to encourage a stimulating conversation between both fields. Here, we identify three theoretical movements:

- (1) From project management to entrepreneurship: venturing process might be considered in many aspects as an ongoing project, but very few scholars aim at comparing both processes and their potential cross-fertilization. The management of a project is based on a range of material practices, devices and tools that support and shape the process. Convincing stakeholders, unfolding a credible storytelling and finding legitimacy to gain resources are for instance one of the main tasks of project managers that entrepreneurs are used to coping with. More broadly, Lindgren and Packendorff (2003, p. 89) suggest the potentialities of a project-based approach to entrepreneurship based on three proximities: entrepreneurial acts are temporary collective experiences in different contexts; entrepreneurship can be studied in terms of people performing entrepreneurial acts in their everyday life; entrepreneurial acts are discontinuities in individual life paths that imply identity (re)constructions. Moreover, the project management may contribute to a de-mythologization of the heroic figure of the entrepreneur as project managers face a large range of constraints and tests in their everyday life and a universe of constraints that force them to create and unfold continuous practices of resistance and negotiation.
- (2) From entrepreneurship to project management: project management tends to focus on project as a tool for implementing strategy and ignore its creative or exploratory side. Projects are associated with changes. They consist of the efficient exploitation of a competitive advantage or in renewing the strategy through the exploration of margins. An entrepreneurial view of projects would offer some avenues in addressing the creation of novelty through projects. Considering the entrepreneurial dimension of project management suggests highlighting the importance of rules subversion and resistance in



the making of projects. An entrepreneurial view of projects may put the emancipatory practices in the midst of preoccupations and of the project management research agenda. Effectuation entrepreneurial theory (Sarasvathy, 2001) might also be a promising avenue for a more pragmatical view of project as a process. This theory would suggest that a project and its ends much more emerge from resources on hand and that the project entrepreneur would recruit partners and stakeholders to increase his or her resources stock but also to create (new) ends. In this view, project ends are not given but elaborated in the making of projects. Entrepreneurial concepts such as effectuation, bricolage and serendipity may help project management to move away from a dominant causal logic. In the same vein, the figure of the entrepreneur is probably useful to rethink the role of the project manager in some complex and pluralistic contexts (DeFillippi and Spring, 2004). A better understanding of the exploratory side of the project manager profession would benefit from a partnership with the research stream in intrapreneurship, which deals with the paradoxes underlying the multiple roles of intrapreneurs. This approach might be very fruitful in the social context of megaprojects (Flyvbjerg *et al.*, 2012).

- (3) At the intersection of the two fields: project management and entrepreneurship meet some close debates about the projectification of society or the entrepreneurial society, about “projectified” or enterprising selves (Lundin *et al.*, 2015). Discourses in both fields – the invasive call for entrepreneurship and projectification – currently contribute to the making of a new subject in organizations and to create a series of juxtapositions within the self (Bröckling, 2016). Project management and entrepreneurship researchers produce very efficient discourses, tools and devices that perform fluid and flexible identities, reduce one’s subjectivity but also reproduce a very neo-liberal order. They have also jointly to question and challenge some of their main assumptions about the importance of deliberation, intentions, causal practices in the making of (entrepreneurial) projects that probably maintain the figure of a heroic agency. Working at this intersection may thus enrich our understanding of how local and temporary identities are performed and unfold in the flow of action. Both fields should also increase their interest for diverse ethnic, social and gendered identities in a very critical way to better approach the reality and adverse conditions of entrepreneurial projects. The inclination toward an entrepreneurial/projectified organization finally provides prospects for the re-imagination of the labor organization. For instance, the project-based organizing may be analyzed in its entrepreneurial dynamic, its ability to truly produce novelty or its tendency to bureaucratize creativity (Cattani *et al.*, 2011; Ferriani *et al.*, 2009). In this vein, the cross-fertilization of entrepreneurship and project management suggests much more paradoxical and nuanced approaches rather than functionalist and technical ones.

The papers

This special section welcomes papers from scholars in one or the other field experiencing new ideas, practices and methods at the crossroad of entrepreneurship and project management and searching for a significant locus for this innovative conversation. The section is built with this idea of offering the reader a trajectory along which the two fields of project management and entrepreneurship meet at different points and intervals. Each meeting point offers new insights and opportunities to nurture a future research agenda.

The first two papers offer conceptual propositions for bridging (or not) the two fields. The first paper “Entrepreneurship and project management relationships: So far so good? Dialogic conversation and Luhmannian perspective” from Fonrouge, Bredillet and Fouché enter with full force in the debate of the ontological position over time of the two multidisciplinary fields of entrepreneurship and project management. Authors acknowledge

the different and very distinct mindsets and cultures of these fields, each one following a unique and parallel path of development. The interest of this paper is certainly its philosophical approach based on Lunhmann and a systemic-discursive perspective. Moreover, it takes out the assumption of a given beneficial convergence between the two fields arguing for a creative tension between the two fields.

Conversely, the second one adopts a clear position of a positive view on the convergence of the two fields. "Process perspectives on entrepreneurship and projects" from Kuura and Lundin is part of a research program dealing exactly on this phenomenon of linking project management and entrepreneurship. Authors situated the debate at the level of the academic world where interdisciplinary integration is difficult, if not rarely possible. The particular relation between entrepreneurship and project management serves as an illustrative case. Authors propose the notion of research "chunks" as a mechanism to bring together different research fields. This is possible, in their view, by the adoption of a process perspective. Interestingly, Kuura and Lundin build on the seminal work of Gartner – whose contribution in this special section offers a literary work on these questions.

The following two papers provide empirical settings to reinforce the perspective of a convergence between project management and entrepreneurship. The first one bring a project view, projectification, to the field of entrepreneurship while the second paper, do just the reverse, as it brings entrepreneurship concepts of effectuation and causation within the project field. Auschra, Braun, Schmidt and Sydow authored the third paper "Patterns of project-based organizing in new venture creation: Projectification of an entrepreneurial ecosystem." Here, the authors adopt an institutional perspective to the study of the Berlin entrepreneurial ecosystem. In this context of start-up ecosystems, they highlight patterns of project-like organizing. So, they suggest referring to projectification as the main driver of what they observe in the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

The fourth paper, "Programming for holistic value creation: Collaboration, coordination and perception" is from Laursen and Killen. The authors' main objective is to explore how programs and projects bring value to different stakeholders. They rely on a case study in the cultural context in Australia. In this paper, they borrow the concepts of effectuation and causation from the entrepreneurship literature to explain how value creation brings different logics within the project/program. This approach reveals how value is created to include non-commercial aspects, so leading to what the authors associate to a holistic value creation.

As we can observe from these last two papers that a conversation exists between both fields, from project management to entrepreneurship (Auschra *et al.*) and conversely from entrepreneurship to project management (Laursen and Killen). In both of these papers, there is an attempt to bring consistency to the intersection of both fields.

With the fifth paper, the special section turns to one of its objectives of including critical avenues to the study at the crossroad of entrepreneurship and project management. The fifth paper is from Rehn, "The vanishing point? – notes on conceptual colonization and epistemological emptying," bring a critical view on the evolution of those fields. The author put into question the will found in these fields to expand their boundaries to a point of losing significance. Studying project society or entrepreneurship society would come at a very general research. Project studies or entrepreneurship studies would hardly be differentiated from organization studies. The author calls for more epistemological rigor in both fields to avoid the emptying and the loss of significant research. This fifth paper echoes the first paper from Fonrouge *et al.* who put into question the need for a convergence, moreover, when this convergence is reached at the cost of conceptual colonization and epistemological emptying.

The sixth paper adopts the format of an interview. We are proud to include in this special section an interview with Jean-Pierre Boutinet, a well-known author in France for its books *Anthropologie du projet* (2012) and *Vers une société des agendas: Une mutation des temporalités* (2004). In this interview, Boutinet highlights seven different themes on the

relation between the two fields, sometimes in resonance with the other and more than others, in contradiction. Nevertheless, what is of interest for this special section is the critical stance Boutinet identified at the intersection of the two fields: that is the social concern from both fields on the “autonomy injunction.”

Finally, the last paper that closes this special section takes a special turn in offering a literature work, namely, a poem from William Gartner, well-known author on entrepreneurship. The poem is titled: “A good man is hard to find: project management, entrepreneurship and serendipity.” For us, it is just fantastic to include this artistic piece of work from a well-known scholar: it is a mark of fruitful combination between science and creativity. Moreover, the particular format of the poem that is the Japanese Haiku, invites all of us to undertake a reflective process on this topic going away from usual conceptual format.

In conclusion, we hope that each of the seven papers forming this special section on entrepreneurship and project management will nurture research in both fields.

Olivier Germain

*School of Business and Management, Université du Québec à Montréal, Montreal,
Canada, and*

Monique Aubry

School of Management, Université du Québec à Montréal, Montréal, Canada

References

- Blomquist, T., Hällgren, M., Nilsson, A. and Söderholm, A. (2010), “Project-as-practice: in search of project management research that matters”, *Project Management Journal*, Vol. 41, pp. 5-16.
- Bröckling, U. (2016), *The Entrepreneurial Self. Fabricating a New Type of Subject*, Sage.
- Cattani, G., Ferriani, S., Frederiksen, L. and Täube, F. (Eds) (2011), *Project-based Organizing and Strategic Management*, Vol. 25, Advances in Strategic Management, Emerald Group Publishing.
- DeFillippi, R. and Spring, S. (2004), “Project entrepreneurs for project-based enterprises: extension or complement to project management competencies?”, *Projects and Profits*, Vol. 4 No. 2, pp. 50-57.
- Drouin, N., Müller, R. and Sankaran, S. (2013), *Novel Approaches to Organizational Project Management Research: Translational and Transformational*, Copenhagen Business School Press.
- Ferriani, S., Cattani, G. and Baden-Fuller, C. (2009), “The relational antecedents of project-entrepreneurship: network centrality, team composition and project performance”, *Research Policy*, Vol. 38 No. 10, pp. 1545-1558.
- Flyvbjerg, B., Landman, T. and Schram, S. (Eds) (2012), *Real Social Science: Applied Phronesis*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Hjorth, D., Holt, R. and Steyaert, C. (2015), “Entrepreneurship and process studies”, *International Small Business Journal*, Vol. 33 No. 6, pp. 599-611.
- Konstantinou, E. and Müller, R. (2016), “The role of philosophy in project management”, *Project Management Journal*, Vol. 47 No. 3, pp. 3-11.
- Lindgren, M. and Packendorff, J. (2003), “A project-based view of entrepreneurship: towards action-orientation, seriality and collectivity”, in Steyaert, C. and Hjorth, D. (Eds), *New Movements in Entrepreneurship*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, pp. 86-102.
- Lundin, R.A., Arvidson, N., Brady, T., Ekstedt, E., Midler, C. and Sydow, J. (2015), *Managing and Working in Project Society: Institutional Challenges of Temporary Organizations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Sarasvathy, S.D. (2001), “Causation and effectuation: toward a theoretical shift from economic inevitability to entrepreneurial contingency”, *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 26 No. 2, pp. 243-263.
- Sergi, V. (2012), “Bounded becoming: insights from understanding projects in situation”, *International Journal of Managing Projects in Business*, Vol. 5 No. 3, pp. 345-363.