[This is not an article, chapter, of conference paper!]
Entrepreneurial organizing: Projects and processes

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Stream outline

In this stream we will focus our attention on studies of how entrepreneurship is organized in practice. Our primary interest is neither in individual entrepreneurs nor in sociocultural settings, but rather how entrepreneurial work are expressed on a day-to-day basis in sociocultural settings.

Theoretically, we build this upon a process ontology implying a view of entrepreneurship as something constantly in emergence through series of social events. It is not a predictable and controllable series of events, however, it is rather a ‘never ending story’ of interactions that may take any imaginable or un-imaginable direction. The entrepreneurial process is therefore also a creative process, as life worlds are constantly created anew through interactions taking place on the boundary between the past and the future. Scientific knowledge on entrepreneurship is thus produced through articulating and understanding how these individuals and collectives construct their entrepreneurial actions as unfolding processes (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2002, 2009, Fletcher, 2006; Drakopoulou Dodd and Anderson, 2007). Given that entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs are socially constructed concepts it is therefore meaningful to create knowledge on the interaction processes in which the concepts are produced and reproduced (Steyaert, 1997).
A core metaphor in the study of entrepreneurial processes is the notion of projects, i.e. entrepreneurial processes seen as time-limited, team-enacted series of events. What we want is to be able to view entrepreneurial processes as discontinuous, discernible and disaggregated series of events – as co-constructed by involved actors as limited in time, scope and social involvement. Our interest is not to squeeze entrepreneurial processes into the project management toolbox, but to be open for the possibility that actors experience these processes as somewhat more compartmentalized than just as passing moments in the stream of consciousness – in line with Steyaert’s (1997) suggestion to focus process studies on series of events. The project metaphor thus enables us to see entrepreneurial processes in terms of temporary organizing processes and to theorize upon how and why interactions unfold as they do.

Consequently, one important aspect of our suggested perspective is to study entrepreneurship as temporary organizing processes. Such an analysis is not confined to entrepreneurship studies only, but it presents entrepreneurship studies with a much needed temporal aspect. In the words of Spinosa et al (1997), the act/temporary process starts as an anomaly in a local/cultural context and is over when history has been written in that very local/cultural context – when the entrepreneurial act has gained acceptance and not seen as an anomaly any more. Then the actor network may of course introduce new anomalies and initiate new entrepreneurial acts – thereby also keep the organization innovating and developing. Usually, this would imply that the act is over when the target market has been reached (the Schumpeterian notion), but in cases of social entrepreneurship matters of acceptance and the dissolution of the boundaries between the actors and the target market would be important aspects (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2006). Starting an entrepreneurial act often imply setting up boundaries between the actors and the rest of the local/cultural world, and ending the act would imply the dissolution of at least some of these boundaries.

A second aspect of the project metaphor is the choice of settings for empirical fieldwork. One problem of putting a view of entrepreneurship as boundary-challenging social processes into practical field research is still to know when and where these processes actually happen. This is a similar problem to the well-known difficulty of identifying entrepreneurs and successful firms before they are established (Davidsson and Wiklund, 2001). One suggestion is to focus empirical inquiry on different sorts of projects intended to be entrepreneurial and/or innovative – such intentions are usually made explicit at early stages in projects (Holler, 1999; Clarysse and Moray, 2004). Projects are thus seen as temporary structured processes of social interaction intended to contribute something new to the environment from which they once emerged (Ekstedt et al, 1999; Hitt et al, 1999). One should of course be aware that the formal project period does not encapsulate the whole process (idea generation often precedes the formal project and diffusion into the environment often happens much later) but that is different from project to project. In the case of art projects, most of the creative work happens within the formal temporal boundaries of the project, while many other projects do not start until the whole process has been thoroughly planned.

As subjects of study, projects share the advantage that they are clearly delineated efforts to identify new ideas, get things done and work in closely coupled teams (Hitt et al, 1999). By studying this kind of event, it should also be easier to delimit the entrepreneurial processes
in a practical way. Many existing operations on the market were originally developed in temporary processes within and between organizations; processes that still exhibit all requisites of entrepreneurship such as new ideas, action-orientation, followers etc (cf. Clarysse and Moray, 2004). When the entrepreneurial act is over, i.e., when the novelty or innovation has reached its market, the process is over and its result diffused into its context for further exploitation (Ekstedt et al, 1999; Lindgren and Packendorff, 2003). Moreover, in some cases, non-entrepreneurial processes are used as ‘windows of opportunity’ that some people in the organization exploit in order to implement controversial ideas. While the result of the process lives on, the process itself ends and the team is scattered – and, perhaps, partly reassembled after a while to construct new processes together.

Based on this, we invite papers relating to entrepreneurship in terms of processes, projects or organizing. Topics include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Empirical studies of innovative projects
- Teamwork in entrepreneurial settings
- Critical Management Theory perspectives on entrepreneurial organizing
- The planning - creativity dilemma in entrepreneurial projects - Entrepreneurial leadership in interaction
- Gendered practices of entrepreneurship and project
- ...

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**References**


