COMMUNICATION AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT: 
SEEDS FOR A NEW CONCEPTUAL APPROACH

In the vast majority of project management literature, communication is treated from a «fayolienne» perspective. In the workplace, project managers, still using traditional models by default, begin to ask for new propositions. At a time when new management theories present communication as a strategic activity, it seems urgent to reconsider the relation between communication and project. A recent empirical study is presented to stress this specific point. Some of its results show that communication, mostly made of social exchanges, is the very heart of the project.

Project Management and Communication: An Old Story

In management textbooks and research work, communication is often cited as an important element to be considered whenever change management is involved, and a fortiori, project management. In the literature on the field of management over several decades there has been no hesitation among a number of authors in stating that communication constitutes a key factor for success whenever one person or the other is confronted with events not usually found among standard business operations (Kotter 1995; Vandangeon-Derumez 1998). Some, such as Armenakis et al. (1993) or Gallstedt (2003), refer to psychology in order to demonstrate the extent to which “adequate” communication can reduce stress and increase motivation. Other authors, starting with Crozier and Friedberg (1977), Axelrod (1992), or even Vaaland (2004), come closer to sociology in explaining how communication can lead to cooperation or collaboration possible in situations involving uncertainty.

Most experts interested in transforming organizations and also project management maintain that a large number of projects can fail due to shortcomings or errors in communication (Elovitz 1999; Kerzner 2000; Karlsen 2002). Cornet (1999) for example writes in Transforming the Organization, About the Project Reengineering Process: “Communication policies are faulty. (...) Deficiencies in this area can be one of the most common errors committed in matters related to supporting reengineering projects. (...) Information provided is too general, and information deemed sensitive is too often avoided. Several authors state that messages are inadequate, motives and objectives in reengineering operations are not adequately explained to staff, and information dissemination is restricted to a small number of insiders.”

By and large, ideas commonly expressed in project management pertaining to the place of communication in project situations could be summarized in the following three concepts. 1) Including
communication in project management makes sense because project management rhymes with “human factors” and “we cannot not communicate”(Watzlawick 1979). 2) Project management must necessarily take communication phenomenon into account, if not the project may fail. 3) Good communication in project mode means project managers must avoid making certain mistakes and must make optimal use of their skills in order to persuade, engage and motivate.

This idea of designating communication gaps as real impediments to the success of a project is not new, in fact it is one held by many researchers in the field. The search for an ideal solution in project communication terms has in fact often obsessed project and change management specialists. In 1986, Perry formulated this idea in a very precise manner when he stressed that “in merger acquisition situations, (...) the right signal must be given to those concerned and this relies on communication.” Smeltzer in 1990 argued along the same lines when as he formulated his proposal for “an effective communication strategy for change,” wherein the focus was on choosing the proper message, channel and time needed for successful communication.

In 1993, Young and Post also took up this notion on the “best option for communication” through their original concept of “eight key factors for effective communication.” For these experts on the processing of change, success was obtained by making a champion of the CEO, one who could harmonize words and actions, practice two-way communication, focus on face-to-face relations, share responsibility, balance the good ration of news/bad news, know clients or partners well, and finally, possess a communication strategy that targets employees.

In 2009, the vast majority of articles published in specialized journals on "project management" and particularly those in North American publications such as Project Management Journal, Computerworld, Inform, Pulp and Paper, Pharmaceutical Technology or Business Credit, suggested the same winning formula for communication in mode project. As an illustration, the authors were in agreement as they declared that the project manager or team leader is the custodian of communication knowledge and must bear full responsibility for communication during the project (Brown 2000; Crawford 2000). If a manager wants his project completed at the right time and place, he must be a “skilled communicator” (Lewis 2001) and thus to succeed he must know how to convince, rally and motivate.

But, and herein lies the main focus of this reflection, exactly what kind of communication are we talking about here? What do the ideas of “good communication” and “avoiding mistakes” imply? And what does this approach involve when being practiced in the field?

Omnipresence of Instrumental Communication

Clearly, in the vast majority of the literature on academic and professional education, communication as applied to project management has been seen as a tool for leading, disseminating, coordinating (tasks), cooperating and controlling. As shown in Figure 1A below, it is represented as management “output.” Thus it is seen as set of skills and tools to be included in an assortment of many accessories that a good project manager should use, including “scheduling” software like MS project. Thus for some experts the communication improvement within a project might otherwise be seen as using the latest generation of software. For this reason American researchers invented the Compass, a software program developed by the Construction Industry Institute (USA, 1999).
More traditionally, project management researchers handled communication as an “ingredient” to be put into use during a project, depending on how its life cycle is paced (according to the authors this includes four to eight distinct stages). For these specialists the quantity and quality of communication deployed must be weighted as a function of the project phase or of progress and serves as a reference point at which the project manager must in turn play his role as a “good” communicator: spokesperson, order giver and motivator. Generally speaking therefore, most classic of texts published during the 70s and 80s, or even the 90s, presented the general communication task as knowing how to disseminate the right information to the right people at the right time, depending on the project situation. This therefore took place outside the usual scope of operations of an enterprise and represented the work done by project directors, the only people responsible for this. Communication errors most commonly identified in the reports found in the literature and specialized journals were caused by misunderstandings or poor control by managers, and involved such ideas as “actively listening,” “questioning,” “sending a message,” ”mobilizing,” “taking the pulse,” “balancing the oral and the written.”

In their most recent literature, as in the books by Lewis (2001) or Weiss and Wysocki (2000), the authors testified that communicating “well” also implied knowing how to “use feedback properly, and being equipped with a “good” information system, appropriate for the project. The key elements here involved listening, considered as one of the most important aspects of project management (as opposed to feedback, considered insufficient) and being equipped with an effective information system (as opposed to sanction controls). In other cases, it involved prioritizing communication on an agenda, not forgetting to explain “the big picture” or knowing how to institute a pointed dialogue (Kerzner 2000). To some experts, these were very precisely the communication needs that the project manager should define because he had to determine the type of leadership needed at each phase of the project. Finally, there was very little scientific literature available on project management (and I willingly stress this point), dealing with communication as a constructive or sharing element, and which considered communication as the brain power needed to develop joint projects, a resource but also a strategic activity that could be used to discover, learn or innovate.
In a very sporadic manner it is thus a matter of communication allowing the redefining, rethinking, changing the meaning, or doing anything but building step by step, conceptualizing, and combing all of them at once. Only a few authors on project management, such as Levitt et al. (1999) or Wird (1997) considered communication to be “input” either for management, or as “data” forming a part of the management definition and upon which the project’s management could be based (Figure 1 B).

**Figure 1B**

*View of Strategic Communication*

This also means that very few Anglo-Saxon researchers followed the footsteps of Midler (1998, 2005), Garel (2003) or even Declerck, Debourse and Declerck (1997) and Navarre, who in 2005 introduced the concept of complexity when discussing project management within the framework of large-scale projects. The collective work entitled *Faire de la recherche en management de projet* (Carrying out Research in Project Management), coordinated by Garel, Giard and Midler in 2004, clearly pointed out that this way still remains marginal.

**Absence of Current References for Management and Communication**

Thus for most specialists involved in the project management field the idea of “project” was to be combined with unknown environments, situations of uncertainty, human factors, value creation and skill acquisition or even entrepreneurship. It seems that in the literature on this field, the definition used for communication in project management stubbornly corresponded to a *Fayolian* style of management, one that is both rigid and standardized. Communicating in a project situation seems to go no further than this vision of a unilateral tool, project management communication in a future guideline-building mode, disciplining, correcting and also levelling. What’s more, searching for an optimal communication method appears to be the rule.

Incidentally (if I may say so), it is easy to detect among so many communication models prevailing in these works, that many are very close to the mathematical models of Shannon and Weaver.
(1949) and Wiener (1962). Thus what can be found in almost all current textbooks on “project management” are such topics as studying the transmitter and receiver, the message design, the importance of the objective and the problems related to noise.

Proposals from those researchers who helped create “the new communication” such as Bateson, Birdwhistell, Goffman, Hall, Jackson or Watzlawick (1954-present) are virtually ignored by all the prescriptive targets in project management. Although the psycho-interactionist perspective put forward by Rogers and Roethlisberger (1952) is copiously referenced and a large number of authors agree on giving credit to ‘active listening,’ almost nothing is said about context, people harbouring intentions, the dynamics of exchanges, merging the differences, etc. As a result, the most current variations on communication are applied to notions of systemic communication (Mucchielli 1998, 1999), translator communication (Callon et Latour 1981, 1986) or even network communication (Stohl 1995), just to quote a few of these concepts and authors. No where on the list can be found reflections on communication and project management.

Otherwise, it is essential to note that in the field of business, communication is generally understood as an output of project management. In any case this is what was expressed by dozens of active project managers during in-depth project management seminars.

During an exploratory time-dependent study conducted from 2001 to 2005 in several management schools in Quebec and France (all data and results available upon request), eighty project managers, enrolled in part time MBA programs or Leadership training, were asked to explain what “to communicate” means, as images and practices. Their answers revealed clearly that they consider themselves to be the only persons responsible for communication inherent to the project. Often, they seem obsessively afraid of not being “skilled communicators,” and thus they seek training in communication skills that will enable them to be more convincing and better listeners. They seemed only slightly aware that other project participants are also communicators, although in reality should be quite aware of this. At the mental level, they hardly ever combine communication with relations. For most of them to “communicating better” automatically means knowing how to express themselves better or obtaining maximum impact when speaking.

Indeed, the majority of these project managers view their communication in project mode as a closed/finite process and they exclude any conflict management (Lovelace, Shapiro and Weingart 2001; Vaaland 2004), management of stakeholders (Karlsen 2002), creative negotiating (Midler 1996) or decision-making in project (Parkin 1996) in the form of communication practices. Their vision of communication acquired in the field (since most project managers have never been trained in applied management communication) is limited to the idea of making announcements (the famous kick off), explaining and persuading their closest colleagues or members of their main team to endure an “ambiguous” situation. Often understanding, sharing the meaning and co-developing –and what’s more including all the project stakeholders – does not form any part of their conceptual definition of communication. Generally speaking, the idea that actually communicating in a project situation could be synonymous with learning, value creation and innovation constitutes a real discovery for them. Just as surprising is the idea that communication can be learned and is not simply an innate human and natural state. Similarly, the term informal communication commonly can only be “synonymous” with: rumour, correction to be made or to get over, sounding like the words problem or sickness, and terms that can be added to a long list of worries inherent in the management of complex human factors in project mode. No need to hide it any more: communication and project management form a fairly badly matched couple as we get ready for the third millennium, this space-time concept agitated by perpetual motion, as many social science researchers might jokingly describe them (Bunge 1999; Morin 1999) along with visionary managers.
Also, and we cannot pretend otherwise for this is a surprising statement: since the 80s many contemporary management definitions have incited us to consider communication as a value generating activity for management in itself. Peters and Waterman (1984) are among some of the leading management experts who paved the way to communication practices at the managerial level. The two authors of *In Search of Excellence* did this by stressing that to properly manage mobilization, managers consider listening and experimentation at all levels of the enterprise. Van der Heidjen (1992), well known as the creator of the “scenario planning” in strategic management, was among those early birds who considered communication as a strategic activity: communication is a key process for the definition of the strategy as well as for its implementation; communication is a basic activity in “collective action”, as part of strategic management; communication is central in management, not at the edge. Senge (1990), by reflecting on the "art and style of organizations who learn," also saw how basic communication served as basic data in management. Champy (1995) later defined communication as one of the five core processes in management. Nonaka and Takeuchi in 1997 were able to demonstrate that communication is a central aspect of new solutions to be built, by incorporating learning and the collective knowledge of all a firm’s participants. As Prahalad and Hamel (1994), who urged managers to use their imagination and to be creative, it happened to be key factor in developing skills and resources within an organization.

It is perhaps useful to recall that in 1973 Mintzberg inaugurated this era of management communication through discovery by observation that all managers spend most of their time at work communicating, sometimes taking on informational and interpersonal roles, along with various decision-making roles.

**It is Time to Reinvent the Communication and Project Management Equation**

But, regardless of the divergence between the various theoretical stances and practices, this finding on committed communication in an outdated relationship with project management was even more surprising, given that recently many books on applied management communication argued in favour of communication having “power” or strategic "value" (Boden 1994; Demers and Giroux 1998). Indeed beyond this and according to several European articles that pay more attention to language or dialectic (Girin 2000; Borzeix 1996, 2000), are important texts on communication produced by management specialists who declare themselves to be in favour of strategic communication (Bartoli, 1991; Collectif Les organisations, 1999)

Among the works of that are mostly of Anglo-Saxon origin are texts by Isaacs (1999) and Giroux (1998). Each in their own way and also very differently see communication as going beyond the usual unilateral processing management mode, finding their place within a dialogue authorizing strategic decision making and leading to the construction of new common practices. For Bouwen and Van Looy (1996), communication takes on a role of meaning setting direction and it is through conversations and interactive processes that organizational innovation finally takes place, and this requires a certain development in the use of common sense. For Barrett, Thomas and Hocevar (1995), communication clearly takes on an organizing role in bringing about change, given that the adopting and sharing of a new language can generate new actions. For Beer, Russell Eisenstat and Spector (1990), communication is rather a founding element in successful change, wherein the change takes place through a “bottom-up” process, based on commitment, shared vision, consensus and the skills of each person.

Brown and Duguid (1991) on the other hand suggest that it is through learning and innovation that the organization can reclaim its status as a community of communities. For Taylor (1993) it is indeed the entire organization that represents “permanent” communication, which leads Mucchielli (1998, 2000) to say that organizations need to be studied using communicational and systemic approaches. Finally for Weick (1986) in management communication represents genuine input because it is directly linked to the processes of “enactment” and organization.
On another level, this “anachronism” concerning to the current vision of communication in project management is puzzling, because more and more project managers (in the same study cited previously) realize there are limits to the skills and the expertise they have acquired in communication and they are requesting training in the "new forms of communication" which will allow them to “create new solutions in work situations.” Even though these managers are not always aware of the possible roles communication can play and the involvement represented in management mode so that they could be encouraged during a project, for the most part they realize that they “have no mastery of communication,” and this results in certain phenomena they would not expect to occur during the project. These project managers have more or less experienced what they refer to as the results of communication gaps: loss of project control, lack of group cohesion, little commitment from some team members, and lack of coordination or ideas. But otherwise they also encounter enriching situations in terms of constructive relationships which they do not know how to control: spontaneous initiatives that are interesting to discuss, increasing interrelations between team members, improvised sharing of knowledge, implicit consensus, emergence of unforeseeable solutions, and the formation of community of interests. In fact, these are the managers who have to deal with the complexity of communication in project mode and who would like to manage a project better through communication, because they believe they understand how this element plays a primordial role in project management. Some openly say they face a real “need to directly connect communication to management” within the project framework and this must be taken seriously.

Within such a context why maintain a project management concept, one so frozen in time and dating back to the static 60s and 70s with its "transmitter-receiver-message-filter-feedback” communication style? It would be nonetheless legitimate to feed this concept with some of the new theoretical acquisitions in management and to meet the new requirements of people in the field. Not only would reinventing the communication and project management equation open up new areas of theoretical exploration and practical methods, it would also encourage communication to be considered as a resource and a strategic activity, thus allowing a project to founded on a management approach better matched with current management concerns. Selecting and pursuing a “new” conceptual orientation for communication in project management could, as both a proposal and an example, mean accepting the idea that the project itself be framed by communication, rather than simply including it.

**Figure 2**

*From a Project Including Communication to a Project Communication Based and Driven*
The project would thus be "communication-based" and "communication-driven" (see Figure 2), according to the words employed by Ford and Ford (1995) in their work on the role of communication in strategic change. Not only would the project be bathed in communication from its very inception (static and synchronic), it would also be led by communication (dynamic and diachronic).

**Communication as a Builder, Developing an Innovative Approach**

In this case project management becomes a function in which communication is given priority and which feeds itself on communication or relies on it. At the practical level, this “builder” vision of communication does not lead to “channelling,” it leads to rethinking the relations project stakeholders have with each other: team leader, project managers, clients, etc. These people would jointly serve as communication and thus project management supervisors, and in this way would be given the power to discuss the project and also to configure and deliver it.

Obviously, this innovative approach also involves reviewing existing relations between the various stages cited in project management: “planning, structuring, scheduling, executing, monitoring, closing” as well as any impacts resulting from parameters such as time, scope, cost, resources, performance and quality. Here, the steps can be interconnected due to the sharing of ideas and meaning. And thus the concept of monitoring that generally goes hand in hand with the concept of “correcting variances” may be closer to the concept of “together discovering and inventing another solution” without there being any obligation to respect a plan that over time has become obsolete. Additionally, the stakeholders are able to steer, accelerate or slow down the project’s pace.

Finally, since every strategic decision made concerning the project (from its formulation to implementation and vice versa, by iteration, trial and error or learning) would result from the “communication” that has taken place (among stakeholders) and is yet to come, there are not necessarily any designated stages in chronological order and constant parameters. In each case communication among the stakeholders identifies these steps and parameters, according to number and characteristic. From this point of view, each written or verbal conversation could be considered as strategic to the project’s success, in the sense proposed by Kees Van der Heijden in *The Art of Strategic Conversation* (1996). This refers to the need to create and assemble (future) scenarios that could be shared, debated and then carried out (see Figure 3).

In keeping with these various concepts, it could also concern a communication resource for individual and collective learning (Giordan 2000), thus allowing the emergence of a community of practices (Wenger and Snyder 2000).

For the project manager, this “rejuvenated” version of the communication and project management equation means not having to support communication on his own. He becomes co-supervisor or co-author, his role being to control the project in such a way that communication would be supported and enriched by the various project stakeholders (from senior management to clients of course, if applicable). These various stakeholders, being communication stakeholders (just as the management), are directly involved in the project and ipso facto are committed to its completion. Axelrod (1992) was keen to emphasize this aspect, thus making his “Conference Model” somewhat original in terms of project management. Here, through a series of mini-conferences taking place in a variety of contexts and with the various stakeholders who would create and then implement the project.
That being said and as Lewis pointed out in his book (2001), with this new concept of the communication and project management tandem, the fact that a team leader has his own specific style of management must not be neglected. He may be Fayolian or Mintzbergian obedience, or guided by Champy’s principles, but knowingly or not he will impose his style of management upon his team, and this may include a certain vision of communication. Thus, it is likely that a “Fayolian” could be quite reluctant to admit that “group discussions” would create any value and that this activity might be of some use in innovating or ensuring the project’s success while a "Champy" adherent would see communication as a self-evident resource in the practice of quality management.

Moreover, we must not forget that the organization bears its own standards, values and cultures and that within the project management framework or in an extraordinary situation still not considered routine, these issues remain fundamental anchorages. Thus, a strongly hierarchical management enterprise where work is authoritarian and work organization is defined and regulated in its every detail (Cornet, 1999), could more easily handle a "Fayolian" style over the course of the project. These aspects are very tangible in the field. At the risk of lapsing into cliché, it must be remembered that downward communication, preferring order and stability is rampant in pyramid-type organizations with traditional values while lateral and upward communication, which allows the blending of ideas and the sharing of power, is valued more in innovative organizations than those having a flatter form (Bartoli 1990; Schwebig 1993; Orgogozo 1998). Also, it simply involves questioning project managers on their flexibility towards changing the existing rules concerning communication modes in their respective businesses and the unanimous response becomes: “It is extremely difficult and anyway it is a slow process.”

Finally and “last but not least,” we must not forget that the stakeholders or actors involved in the project still remain its most important protagonists: it is among these people that communication primarily occurs, even though some researchers such as Callon and Latour (1987) see them as actors communicating as if they were a plate of “coquilles Saint-Jacques” or plate of scallops sitting nicely arranged in their shells. The number of these stakeholders, their origin but also their corporate culture along with their status and profession can influence the modes of communication required or direction to
be encouraged for a given project. As such, an engineer may often feel more helpless than a lawyer when asked to take charge of communications in a project. A manager working within a public organization and used to operating in a bureaucratic manner could quickly become disarmed when taking part in a project that resorts to organic communication.

Of course in an international project there may be several national cultures rubbing shoulders and mingling, and this again may have an impact on the role that communication plays. As pointed out by Hofstede (1980), some national cultures see communication as a source of enrichment while others are more prone to considering communication as a tool for leadership. Indeed, regardless of the case at hand, the convergence of thinking from a variety of sources can result in substantial discussion and stress Adler (1994).

Obviously the points mentioned above are strongly interrelated and interdependent (styles of management, organizational standard, types of culture, categories of actors), communication in project management therefore becomes a complex phenomenon to control. At the communication level itself this means there cannot possibly be "one best way", no stimulus-response model within easy reach, no identifiable cause and effect relationships and no linear path to suggest. This perspective suggests that we need to invent solutions on a case-by-case basis, taking care to examine all related aspects, from the type of project to the category of stakeholders, along with the team leader’s personal managing style. In reality it is precisely at this point where solid project manager training in applied to management communication would take on its fullest meaning, and it is at this specific point that managers training should be reconsidered from the pedagogical perspective. Through interactive seminars dedicated to applied management communication, the learning of “strategic” communication could take place at the very heart of university and business school programs. One of the greatest obstacles to teaching here would be the obvious difficulty of following a practical method, one that would fit within a pedagogic discourse. This refers to a seminar deeply immersed in and led by communication. This perspective will henceforth constitute a challenge, yet needless to say it should be undertaken without any delay.

Moreover, there are certain experiments already existing that could be helpful in putting together such a seminar, one leaning towards building up communication among the participants in real time and within a given institutional framework, and which could then be managed by means of “strategic” communication.

**Seeds for a New Conceptual Approach**

In order to complete or strengthen most of the thinking expressed in this text regarding a project rooted in and fed by communication and in terms of project management where communication is considered as a resource and a strategic activity, we think it is interesting to take a look at some of the results obtained from a descriptive and empirical study carried out in France and in Quebec (2004 and 2005).

We visited 10 industrial sites in the two countries and met 10 project directors, 15 project managers and 15 specialists actively working in various projects. The general purpose of the study was to identify and describe the nature and structure of communication in the course of a project as well as to determine the contribution of the communication to a project. We used a mixed model methodology, focused on pragmatic perspective, as prescribed by Tashakorri and Teddlie (1998). This specific paradigm suggests the use of different conceptual perspectives and the mix of quantitative and qualitative methods. We made deep interviews (semi-structured guide) and closed surveys (Lickert scale, 5 points). These two tools were used simultaneously with the 40 respondents. Data have been treated with NVivo and SPAD software.
Our results confirm the interest of changing the historical view on communication in projects, as discussed above. Some of our principal findings demonstrate that: A/ communication is at the very heart of the project and is rarely considered as a risk to control; B/ communication in the course of a project is mostly made of social exchanges.

Figure 4

Results about Communication and Project

| From the 15 actors with a very high level of satisfaction and a project in very good shape |
| Communication enriches the project: | 73% YES, 20% RATHER YES |
| Communication conducts the project: | 73% YES, 13% RATHER YES |
| Communication is the base of the project: | 53% YES, 10% RATHER YES |
| Communication is a major risk for the project: | 46% NO, 13% RATHER NO |
| Communication makes the project more complex: | 33% NO, 40% RATHER NO |
| Communication makes the project fragile: | 53% NO, 20% RATHER NO |

For these respondents, communication enriches more the project, is more the base of the project and guides it more. Communication is clearly not a risk, nor a perturbator, nor a fragilizer.

Among the 40 respondents questioned, 25 project actors, who experienced rather good levels of satisfaction when working on successful projects, reported that: “enriched communication guides the project and forms its very foundation”, as Midler has suggested (1998). The 15 other respondents, who experienced high level of satisfaction confirmed and amplified, as shown in Figure 4 above. In addition, within the framework of this research, the idea that communication was thus part of project input (and not output) was a dominating factor for all respondents. This was found to be the case whether they were project managers, project directors or enrolled specialists.

Furthermore, the 40 respondents interviewed unanimously stressed that their communication is mostly made of social exchanges, as shown in Figure 5 below. Communication as a tool is in use to institutionalize informal processes, linking these results to those of Giroux and Taylor (1995) in general management. They are two major forms of communication in the course of the project and they play different roles: social exchanges “enhance and boost the project” and technical supports allow to “freeze ideas and to verify actions”.

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Our respondents mentioned that communication was intense during the first critical moments of the project, very early in the course of the project (Jolivet 2003) and during some others specific events as crisis and implementation. Communication here is used “to create and to resolve”.

**Figure 5**

The Two Major Types of Communication in the Course of a Project

Of course, these former results of our research can not be extrapolated, but through our study, we learned also that some project actors do not realize by themselves their projects are carried out by a communication which leads the entire project. We understood that these practitioners are not used to go through reflective action and that their knowledge in communication is somehow “old fashioned” (Crawford et al., 2006).

Seen that, we considered that, at the workplace, the relationship between communication and project is may be already transformed but nobody pays attention to this in the course of action. On the other hand, we discovered there are project managers who seek how to “feed” the management of their project through communication. We met actors who created home-made innovative practices, as ‘sharing activities’. Again, we interpreted this situation as if, in the workplace, the equation communication-project-management is already under review.

So, for now, our findings concern more researchers than practitioners. They suggest at first there is a strong need to re-conceptualize communication and project management, as Figure 2 proposes. In a
way, these findings could be viewed as seeds for a new conceptual approach. At least, to consider this interpretation as plausible could conduct to develop new frames for research in the field of project management.

We know, as researchers, that communication is a blurry, complex, effervescent, elusive phenomenon. We know that to capture it in organizations is always a challenge, as well as its interpretation. But we think that researchers in the field of project management should produce more empirical studies to make the scientific discussion growing up.

As an additional conclusion, we want to suggest that working at the project team level could represent a rich way to develop new issues in communication and management. Obviously it is hoped that all our reflections above, from the first to the very last sentence, will contribute to the discussion and also build upon the Science, according to McCloskey (1985).

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