INSTITUTIONAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN QUEBEC

The objective of this article is to analyze from an institutional perspective the efforts by two entrepreneurs within governmental organizations to promote new practices and programs and the nature of the challenges encountered in deviating from and attempting to disrupt existing institutionalized practices.

Introduction

Institutions produce a particular spectrum of entrepreneurial activity (Dew, 2006). Yet, most discussions on institutions focus on their stability or fixity. Accordingly, a particularly elusive question is how new practices and structures become institutionalized? The objective of this article is to advance in our knowledge on how institutional entrepreneurs within governmental organizations go about to transform institutions and disrupt existing ones, and to better understand some of the challenges they encounter. Interestingly, institutional and entrepreneurship scholars have paid little attention to why, how, and when, individuals –instead of organizations or groups of individuals – act as institutional entrepreneurs, i.e., “break with the rules and practices associated with the dominant institutional logic(s) and thereby develop alternative rules and practices” (Battilana, 2006: 657). We aim at addressing this gap in the literature, especially concerning the “how”. For that purpose, we draw on recent developments by institutional theorists (Leca and Nacacche, 2006; Seo and Creed, 2002) that make use of the imagery of the entrepreneur to analyze how endogenous institutional change occur. We build as well on existing literature on entrepreneurship and notably on process models of corporate entrepreneurship (Burgelman, 1983; Floyd and Woolridge, 1999) to gain insights on the political dimension of entrepreneurship in the context of government related organizations.

In order to do so, this article presents two case studies from two different organizations in Quebec, Canada. The first case study comes from the Ministry of Industry and Commerce while the second comes from a business school in Quebec, Canada. These two case studies, once analyzed in parallel, offer a basis in comparing two similar but yet different type of institutional entrepreneurs, all this in a province well-known to host entrepreneurs. It is important to mention at this stage that we are not providing accounts in regards of the result of these institutional changes but rather our interest lies in the process leading to such a deviation in the institutionalized structure. In other words, we are interested in the how –and partly on why– rather than on the what.
The article is organized as follows. We begin with an overview of the relevant literature to investigate how individuals go about to change institutionalized practices and structures. First, we review the literature on institutional entrepreneurship and elaborate on the potential that the conceptualization of organizations as pluralistic arenas offers to extend existing developments on corporate entrepreneurship that focus on its political nature. We also briefly elaborate on the notion of productive resistance. In a next step, we describe the research site, methodology, and strategy for data analysis. The core of this paper entails a rich illustration and analysis of our two institutional entrepreneurs’ challenges and actions. We conclude by discussing how our findings contribute to existing theory on institutional and corporate entrepreneurship.

Explaining Change: Institutions and Entrepreneurship

Explaining change creates a serious impasse for institutionalists (Schneiberg, 2007): how to change when the “tools for the job” are mainly designed to explain stability? Responding to early criticisms to institutional theory for being chiefly used to explain homogeneity and persistence (Dacin, Goldstein, & Scott, 2002), major efforts have been devoted to tackle and restore human agency in explanations of endogenous institutional change (DiMaggio, 1988; Sewell, 1992; Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). Being a common ground among institutional theorists the “view of institutions as the source of stability and order” (Scott, 2001: 181), the challenge is to explain how institutional change is possible if actors are fully conditioned by the institutions that they wish to change (Holm, 1995; Seo and Creed, 2002). In that context, the powerful imagery of entrepreneurship as a mean to induce and explain institutional change gained momentum chiefly responding to DiMaggio’s (1988) call for bringing back interest and agency into institutional analysis (Greenwood and Suddaby, 2006; Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006).

However, the image of the entrepreneur as institutional change agent has also been a source of controversy among organization theorists, especially when accompanied by voluntarist, un-embedded conceptions of individual action (Holm, 1995; Leca & Naccache, 2006). As a result we observe vivid scholarly discussions on how to solve the ‘paradox of embedded agency’—i.e., on explaining how institutional change is possible if actors are fully conditioned by the institutions that they wish to change (Holm, 1995; Greenwood and Suddaby, 2006). Such paradox, has, a long history in social sciences, often expressed as the agency versus structure debate. Recent attempts to address such paradox can be encountered in Giddens (1979) and Bourdieu (1990) theorizations, which are not exempted of criticisms (Archer, 2000).

Within the field of organization studies, recent work has focused on how entrepreneurs’ social position—in the Bourdieusian tradition—may enable them to conduct divergent organizational change (i.e. to act as institutional entrepreneurs) despite institutional pressures (Battilana, 2006); how entrepreneurs make sense, transpose, and use different institutional elements and logics to legitimize new practices or disrupt existing ones (Creed, Scully, and Austin, 2002); how actors frame stories that might help to induce cooperation from people in their group that appeal to their interests and identity, while at the same time using those same stories to frame actions against potential opponents (Fligstein, 2001).

Interestingly, relying on DiMaggio’s view of institutional entrepreneurs as “organized actors with sufficient resources” (1988: 14), a common feature in most empirical accounts of institutional entrepreneurship is, the focus on the activities of powerful actors, such as state
organizations (Dobbin, 1994), large multinational corporations (Garud et al, 2002; Fligstein, 1990), or professional associations (Greenwood et al., 2002). This provokes at least two reflections. The first is that, as highlighted by Battilana (2006), very few studies have looked at individual institutional entrepreneurs. Yet, as Battilana points out, the analysis of institutional entrepreneurship at the individual level is possible in organization studies because organizations correspond to “one type of setting in which individuals may act as institutional entrepreneurs” (2006: 656). She adds that it is the case “when individuals conduct divergent organizational changes (i.e. changes that break with the dominant institutional logic in a given organizational field)” (2006: 656).

Second, the focus on actors with “sufficient resources” seems at odds with received wisdom in the traditional entrepreneurship field. Entrepreneurship scholars often portray entrepreneurs as sort of bricoleurs that mobilize, gather, and “make do” with resources that they typically do not control (Baker and Nelson, 2005, Stevenson and Jarillo, 2001). Thus, an important question is how to reconcile such apparently contradictory views.

**Organizations as Pluralistic Arenas: Reconciling Corporate and Institutional Entrepreneurship?**

Sharma and Chrisman define corporate entrepreneurship as “the process whereby an individual or a group of individuals, in association with an existing organization, create a new organization or instigate renewal or innovation within that organization” (1999: 18). While in the literature there are many models of corporate entrepreneurship (for a recent review see Ireland, Covin and Kuratko, 2009), for our purposes those that are more process-focused such as Burgelman’s (1983) and Floyd and Lane’s (2000) models are particularly relevant. The main thrust of these models is on the roles of various levels of management, and in particular on the role of middle managers in conceptualizing the strategic implications of their initiatives in general system terms as well as on the role of top management to allow viable entrepreneurial initiatives to modify the corporate strategy (Burgelman, 1983).

A key element of such process models is the emphasis on the political dimension of corporate entrepreneurship. Thus, for Burgelman, the determination of the strategic context is an inherently political organizational that involves critical activities such as delineating new fields of business development and retroactive rationalizing. In the same vein, championing activities linking impetus process of a particular venture with the process of strategic context determination are, to a large extent, political activities though which “more brilliant organizational champions were able to influence the dispositions of top management and make corporate management see the strategic importance of a particular new business field for corporate development” (1983:238).

Interestingly, a non-negligible amount of prior institutional research sought to explicitly deal with the problem of agency at the organizational level (see Hirsch and Lounsbury, 1997). While new institutionalists focused on the organizational field as the level of analysis (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983), Selznick (1949; 1957) emphasized the role of leadership and agency in creating and shaping institutions. In this vein, an emerging view among institutionalists sees organizations as pluralistic organizations (Kraatz & Block, 2007) meaning that within an organization different interests and coalitions coexist that struggle to define what the organization should be and how it should work and get organized. All in all, this favours an eminently political view of organizations that draws directly on March’s institutionalism (March, 1994; March & Olsen, 1995), sociological theories of identity (Stryker, 1987; Stryker & Serpe, 1982), and Selznick’s (1949; 1957) institutionalism. Both
March and Selznick institutionalisms are organization-centric rather than field-centric institutionalisms and suggest a view of organizations as venues or arenas in which different groups coexist and vie for control on an ongoing basis (Kraatz & Block, 2007).

Such view, we argue, is congruent with the one that comes from corporate entrepreneurship process models (Burgelman, 1983; Floyd and Lane, 2000). Therefore, we see potential for cross-fertilization of these two different theoretical lenses when looking at entrepreneurship within an existing organization. Accordingly, individuals (to-be entrepreneurs) sit at the nexus of overlapping institutional systems and logics (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Fligstein, 2001; Seo & Creed, 2002) and they can choose either to consent and conform to one set of institutionalized rules and practices (Oliver, 1991) or to dissent.

In parallel, in the last decade several scholars have pointed out that major attention should be paid to how actors resist and dissent (Piderit, 2000; Marquis and Lounsbury, 2007). Yet, while often resistance is typically seen in ‘negative’ terms, as Courpasson, Clegg and Dany stress, “resistance needs not only be negative and oppositional but may be used to produce better understanding as well as additional options and solutions” (2008: 4). This phenomenon is referred to as creative, productive or positive resistance (Courpasson et al, 2008; Fleming and Spicer, 2007; Morrill, Zald and Rao, 2003). Deviance in this case is motivated by a desire to help the organization not only to perform better but also to be a better place, while avoiding wrong decisions; or by creating opportunity to increase the positive reputation of the organization. It is not our intention to argue that all instances of corporate or institutional entrepreneurship are examples of deviance and resistance. However, we believe that such imagery captures well some of the features of the activities of entrepreneurs in defining and pushing new projects and practices. Furthermore, we argue that it might be particularly illuminating to understand some of the dynamics involved in the efforts by entrepreneurs to determine the strategic context –namely, the ‘political processes through which middle-managers attempt to convince top management that the current concept of strategy needs to be changed so as to accommodate successful new ventures” (Burgelman, 1983: 237-38) – and, more importantly, the structural context which for Burgelman includes the ‘diverse organizational and administrative elements whose manipulation is likely to affect the perception of the strategic actors concerning what needs to be done to gain corporate support for particular initiatives” (1983; 239). The structural context is, in turn, shaped and controlled by top managers. This paper touches this phenomenon while displaying two case studies of entrepreneurship in traditional bureaucratic institutions.

Method and Settings

Methodology

To examine entrepreneurship in governmental organizations we opted to draw on one case study in each of the chosen two organizations to be able to go deeper in the analysis of our data. In an exploratory phase of a theoretical problem like ours, case study as a qualitative method is “essential in clarifying personal and perceptual data collected; also, it helps in

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1 For the purpose of this paper we discuss this phenomenon primarily from the perspective of institutional entrepreneurship and therefore use the terms corporate and institutional entrepreneur interchangeably.
building rapport and mutual understanding with participants prior to conducting interviews and surveys” (Courpasson et al., 2008:16).

We use the following criteria to pick these two case studies (Patton, 2002: 243). The first criterion consisted in finding individuals working in a governmental institution in Quebec and known by its surrounding (colleagues, employees, etc) to be resistant to the institution’s rules and structure. The second criterion implied having a specific completed (or ongoing) project elaborated by the chosen individual and for which the structure would demonstrate a potential institutional change. The unit of analysis is the individual (people-focused according to Patton, 2002:231) as our research question, “how do agents disrupt the structure of an institution even when encountering organizational resistance and what motivates them”, set the ground for this choice. We used a semi-structured interview format to get the data from 5 individuals: the actors per se and one or two of their close collaborators in link to the specific project discussed in the case study. We also used complementary data such as the documents written by these institutional entrepreneurs to set the ground of their project within their institution or with their external partners. The triangulation of multiple sources of data contributes to this research external reliability (Yin, 2003). The internal reliability is established through the two case studies displaying similar institutional structure.

Research Sites

The first case comes from the Ministry of Industry and Commerce of the province of Quebec back in 1997. We call our actor Dave. He was director in this organization for over 20 years. The hierarchical structure displays 6 different levels The structure and procedures are strongly regulated. Communication of any type (projects, memo, advice, request, etc) from the various departments to the Minister in place must answer a specific format that can go over 20 iterations. Even informal structure of communication or friendship between individuals would not cut short this very long process. The province of Quebec is a socially, welfare, oriented society. Therefore, the governmental structure is historically important and is especially not efficient compare to other type of governments elsewhere in the world (Capps & Clermont, 2004). In this case study, we will be analyzing one project in particular that Dave started in 1997. A large scale project involving numerous internal and external partners and that was unexpected coming from a government representative.

The second case comes from a public university of business in the province of Quebec and the project started in 2005. We call our actor Christopher. He is holder of a research center and has been recognized on many occasions by its peers for his numerous publications and pedagogical skills. This business school has more than 250 professors, 35 programs and more than 40 research centres. Belonging to the North American system, chair holders are responsible to get sponsorships from private companies; they need to produce many publications out of their research projects which have usually bigger scale than when they were plainly professors; and they are usually responsible for a program in their specialization. These responsibilities and many others such as governmental grant application, take a lot of time. As we will highlight later in this paper, Christopher makes his way around these official roles. For the purpose of this research paper, we are interested in particular to the last project that consumes most of Christopher’s time, a radio project aiming to inform more in depth the general public about his specific research field. This project has been running for 3 years now and knows success with the public.
In brief, each of these organizations presents an opportunity to analyze the presence of institutional entrepreneurship within a context that does not favor such behaviors.

**Seeing Institutional Work in Organizations: How and Why Deviate?**

We propose here two cases of institutional entrepreneurs in different institutions but yet similar in the sense that they both belong to organizations that are important in size, in network and that display rigid structure being hierarchical or procedural. These structural elements have in common to keep employees of all hierarchical levels within fixed and even scleroses rules while these institutions do not need to be close to their clients’ needs in order to survive (Assens & Baroncelli, 2002).

The Ministry of Industry in Quebec is one of these two examples. Even though, the noble desire of high level managers and ministers is to keep in touch with the clientele in order to be able to propose laws, regulation or even financial programs to meeting their needs, the reality is just not so in most of the cases (Kornberg & Clarke, 1992). This continual turnover of parties with opposite economical values does not provide a stable ground for the employees beneath this apparatus. The structure does not fear for its survival. Entrepreneurship is not promoted within its wall, even the rules to obey and the processes to follow if any project occurs to one’s mind is so lengthy and complicated by administrative rules that most people just let go their projects and creativity (Roth et al., 1986). In such an environment, individuals that succeed to overcome the cemented routine demonstrate specific characteristics.

These characteristics have been well considered by the literature (Fillion, 1999; Hisrich, 1990) and the objective here is not to repeat this exercise. On the contrary, our intention is focus on how and why breaking the rules of the organization that does not promote nor support such projects, why stay there and fight against the mainstream thinking?

**Figure I**

**Project Description for the Ministry of Industry and Commerce**

In 1997, the economical context for businesses was good and promising. The globalisation was still considered an opportunity for most institutions. The dot com period was still positive even if slightly decreasing in intensity. The government wanted to promote small and medium organizations to help them be part of these important socio-economical movements. Dave was coming back from a professional governmental assignment in New York where these trends were even more amplified. He saw an opportunity in the convergence of these elements and used his network to start a new project. He firmly believed everyone, even his hierarchy, would benefit from an official and practical link between three institutions having a similar objective: promoting small and medium businesses.

He started writing his ideas on the functionality of a network between a university that was aiming to train mostly future managers of smes, a national bank for which smes were an important axis of development for their value creation, and a ministry that main objective was to put in place various projects helping smes to size the worldwide economical opportunities. He proposed a new class project that would take place at university, over a year, and in which students would have to do a real market development project for real smes in New York, which was one of the biggest exportation markets for Canadian back then. This cheap labour taught to gain competitive intelligence on another market was an incredible opportunity for
smes and the three institutions eventually finalized their agreement on this unusual project of networking. Eleven years after, the project is still alive.

The organization surrounding Dave is not his creation. Dave properly navigates problems that arise in a way that do not hurt his professional reputation. He generates buy-in from partners at first, important partners such as the bank, a university and local organizations of all sizes. Then, he used to search for senior management’s approval but only when external partners would have committed themselves in informal letters of intention. A document would then be prepared which would mention right at the beginning the objectives that this project answers in regard to the governmental strategic objectives. One of this document established nine of these gains in regards to the 2000 strategic intentions of the Ministry such as: “considering the enormous needs in strategic information relating to New York for the business community in Quebec”, “considering the important need that has to exist between universities, employers, and agent responsible for the economical development”, and “considering the urgent needs of expertise in selling products and services of Quebec internationally”.

Most of all, Dave has shared with us that the continuous objective and value he kept throughout these years, so the basic reason he stayed in the government, is that he firmly and deeply believed in the social objective of the government, “existing for the clientele”. He carried profoundly the governmental mission even though the institution did not abide to it itself. He had a social dream that was more important than the fights he had to carry to convince the organization on various projects. The only tactic he kept along his career in order to stay so positive was to change of directorship every five years or so. He moved from one team to another in different departments.

**Figure 2**

**Project Description for the Business School**

Christopher has had great academic success throughout his career. He launched a research centre in 2003 to get the chance to work exclusively on projects that concerned his passion in management. He had to network a lot with businesses to build the relationships that permit any research centre to gain legitimacy within the business school, for the monetary and research perspectives, and also in regards to external credibility. Two years later, the investment of time and energy lead to a sustainable research centre. Christopher chose at that moment to invest even more time and energy to create a new project. The objective was to start a radio program where he would interview important persons, being in business or not, that were working on his management subject. He deeply believed in alternative ways to do research and thought that he would bring much more insight to organizations through this path than through formal academic writings. To realize this unusual project, he had to commit himself enormously to a point were he was almost out of his official professorial role. This radio project has been running for three years now and Christopher is working now to get “official” research out of these interviews through his doctoral students. We can assert that Christopher is doing research because it has been recognized through some recent articles and conferences and also because the dissertation proposal has been accepted with very little resistance by the organization.
However, the path to lead to this result has been busy with many organizational obstacles and very little support by his peers.

As for our second case, Christopher’s explanation for breaking rules comes from a similar motivation. He is one of the most prolific authors of books and articles at his university. He uses his name to do what he firmly believes in. He says there is a higher goal that everyone has to fulfil in order to be satisfied with oneself. For Christopher, this objective consists in giving the most of his knowledge and values to the business community through projects that improve their practices and reflexions. This aim is above anything else. It even pushes further the professional purpose he has to do in his professorial role. Christopher uses the structure of the organization and his professional title to give to the society at large even if it means bending some organizational rules or professional traditions. He is especially motivated as his retirement is in less than ten years. Christopher wishes to leave his legacy to the business community. Therefore, in the past three years, he devoted a lot of his time to build and put in place a radio project that diffuses, every week, over an hour interviews with specialists in his domain. It aims at promoting best practices but, most of all, giving a platform for people working in organizations to share and learn from each other. This project has had great success since its beginning. It denotes the energy involved in this unusual project. To give this project a life, Christopher had to sell the project to the institution even though he has some latitude in deciding where the funds of the research centre goes. Christopher had to go through important negotiation with private partners, with the radio channel, with the school. He showed great capacity and tenacity to link various stakeholders together.

In observing Dave and Christopher, an important facet of their work is the attempt to create new systems of meaning within the organizations they are embedded in. Such creation can be seen as both sense-making and sense-giving since, they promote their own views of the organization even if behind the curtain the convincing period was laborious. They both gave a positive light to their organization in regards of external stakeholders. But how did they succeed such a disruption of usual practices?

The chair in management that Christopher has put in place in 2002-2003 needs large amount of business financial contributions that mostly go to the university and not the research centre per se. To be accepted by the institution it needs to go smoothly and answers administrative and political expectations and rules. The financing, growth and technical challenges of this type of radio project can be dealt with only by a person that possesses a certain number of key characteristics such as tenacity, creativity, and resilience (Fillion, 1997:18) as well as social skills –e.g., ability to convey and frame messages that resonate in wide audiences, and ability to bring in potential partner (Fligstein, 1997). In this regards, we can observe that the nature of this type of institutional entrepreneurship involves a sequence of events over time (Gartner & Shane, 1995) that has permitted Christopher to set the stage for such a demanding project. The research centre proves now to be a stepping stone to promote a huge business project that is not officially recognized as answering the academic expectations in regards to a professor role. Six years off the official academic path to give to the business community. Both actors, Christopher and Dave had to face at some point or another strong resistance of their own institution towards their deep involvement in projects for the clientele but not for the organization. However, an important facet of their work was to bring legitimacy to their projects and actions by gaining the support of external partners that committed themselves to their respective project and were ready to engage, in writing, to
it giving a stable ground difficult to reverse for the mother organization that wished to answer expectations of these external stakeholders. Furthermore, both of them were trying to frame their initiatives and projects as being not detrimental but rather thought to make their organizations better aligned with what they thought was their core mission.

**How to Develop Alternative Rules and Practices: Elements Promoting the Emergence of Entrepreneurship within Organizations**

The previous section illustrates that creating change within institutions is difficult and need certain processes in order to, first, give impetus to the changes (Burgelman, 1983) and, second to ensure the durability of the change. As Hwang & Powell mention it “creating change in existing institutional arrangements can be considered as a form of entrepreneurship” (2005: 180). Furthermore, such creation is not easy and it is not a predictable process as it is ripe with politics and ongoing negotiations. As Machiavelli put it long ago, “There is no more delicate matter to take in hand, nor more dangerous to conduct, nor more doubtful in its success, than the creation of a new order. For the initiator has the enmity of all who would profit by preservation of the old institutions and merely lukewarm defenders in those who would gain by the new ones.” A key characteristic of institutional entrepreneurs is the need to be able to envision new practices and then get other to adopt them. Dave created new practices of networking between important institutions that used to do their own business without major consideration for the others. In fact, the constraints of the governmental institution provided a platform for the unfolding of entrepreneurial activities (Schneiberg, 2007). Christopher and Dave used their actor’s position in a social network which is known to promote their project slightly “off beaten track” in regards to the original constraints. Bargaining and negotiating were both inevitable because of the degree of dependency on the control of certain resources they don’t possess but have access to (Fligstein, 2001; Mair and Marti, 2009).

As Garud et al. mention “exchange mechanism or the support for a project is contingent on the perception that tangible and or intangible benefits are forthcoming to other actors” (2007: 19). This process has taken a lot of time and importance for both projects. Dave estimated that 50% of his job time was to convince other partners of their benefits in joining the New York network, both inside and outside the institution. As for Christopher, he conducted up to thirty meetings just for the elaboration of the rights supporting the radio project. Christopher’s project is considered a success by external partners after 4 years on radio. However, the institutional support is in its way to be gained as illustrated in Figure II.

Institutional entrepreneurship involves interventions in the ideational realm as actors construct and communicate rationales or reasons to other actors concerning why they should support or at a minimum not resist the institutionalization project (Hardy and Maguire, 2007). Such processes resemble Burgelman’s characterization of middle managers championing activities as encompassing the ‘ability to articulate a convincing master strategy for the new field” (1983: 238). One of Dave’s arguments was entrepreneurship and SMEs in Quebec. Using the same ideology that is carried in the society, he adjusted his discourse from one partner to another. The official papers for the government mentions “employment for young people” considering that at that time, eleven years ago, the unemployment rate was particularly high, “increased expertise on the New York market” being the most important exportation market for the local companies, etc. Thus, the logic used for the bank consisted in “unique opportunity to be the first bank to help your SMEs clientele in another way than
financing”, “first bank to be a governmental partner in an innovative project”, and so on and so forth.

As for the discourse aiming to convince the university, he used two levels, one for the administration and the other for the students because ultimately to have students in the class in order to make this project real was a sine qua non condition. The administrative sales pitch consisted in “the first university in Quebec to give a practical class over a year while having a team of professors coaching nonstop the evolution of the consultation project”, “the first university in which students negotiate their own contract of consultation and get money out of it”, “the chance to increase the network of the university in regards to the SMEs and with two other big institutions that can strengthened this business link”. These arguments were primordial for the university’s reputation.

The second part of the academic negotiation aimed at convincing students to join this project. However, this type of class was unusual because they inherited a lot of responsibilities in regards to their learning: “the chance to get unique practical abilities in market development which is a usual senior role”, “money to do their project if they succeed to negotiate more than the fee of the journey”, “a team of professors that would coach them all year long”, and “a network of students over the years that experienced the same unique learning”.

All in all, this illustrates the importance of having a clear understanding of political games, negotiation abilities, capacity to change his discourse to fit the interlocutor’s frame of reference, enthusiasm in positive outcomes, leadership to empower partners or employees, good listeners, and being visionary are crucial aspects that institutional or corporate entrepreneurs need to display (Basso, 2006; Fillion, 1999; Elford & Hemstreet, 1996). Furthermore, this also points out the importance of framing the initiatives so that they resonate to the different audiences invoked (Creed, Scully and Austin, 2002).

Christopher had a continuous contact with industries since the creation of the research centre. Many reasons underline this fact: need for sponsors, field for research, allies for innovative and practice oriented research project, clients to assist to the conferences, guest speakers for the radio project, etc. This continuous contact with SMEs and big companies lead to a lot of realignment of research project, a lot of sales pitch with the use of various discourses, a lot of time to maintain relations with these companies and keeping in touch with organizational movements to know who does what plus keeping in touch with their strategic intent in order to fit the discourse in.

This network management takes a lot of time but is the key of the success of the projects implemented so far by Christopher. This type of activity, called strategic framing by Rao (1998), consists in the articulation of the change project to fit each specific collective attribution. As Garud et al., put it, “through particular frames, new practices can be justified as indispensable, valid, and appropriate” (2007: 962)

Both institutional entrepreneurs had to bridge multiple stakeholders to leverage resources in order to create new institutions or to transform existing ones (Fligstein, 2001; Maguire et al., 2004). The entrepreneurs have to be supported by existing and external mobilized actors who stand to gain from the success of the institutionalisation of the new project. In doing so they derived autonomy from the core institution and gained external legitimacy (DiMaggio, 1988; Suchman, 1995). Institutionalists have long emphasized the
tendency of individual and collective actors to use institutionalized rules and accounts for their own ends (DiMaggio, 1988; Douglas, 1986), noting “the creativity of actors in using the ideological and institutional resources available” and “the practical work” of actors” as they manipulate definitions and the use of available standards of virtue”. However, it seems in our case that these two institutional entrepreneurs broke away from scripted behaviors (Dorado, 2005) and initiated institutional change for social and not individual benefits. They identified political opportunities, framed issues and problems, and mobilized constituencies while anchoring their collective projects into the infusion of new beliefs, norms, and values.

“Institutional entrepreneurship requires actors to dislodge existing practices, introduce new ones, and then ensure that these become widely adopted and taken for granted by other actors in the field” (Hardy & Maguire, 2007:18). Furthermore, as Hardy and Maguire pointed out, “mobilization of resources, construction of rationales for institutional change, discursive process through which new practices are framed and legitimized involves the mobilization and recombination of materials, symbols and people in novel and even artful ways” (2007: 18). Both Dave and Christopher followed this process.

**When Individuals do it: Concluding Remarks**

Institutionalization as an unfinished process means that institutions must be reproduced continuously, and their reproduction is often problematic (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006). Any actor can trigger institutional changes, even non dominant members (Dorado, 2005; Scott, 1985), and importantly, even without any interest. This is an important insight that permits to explore possible avenues of cross-fertilization between the literatures on corporate and institutional entrepreneurship. Thus, while, as suggested above, often research on institutional entrepreneurship has focused on powerful actors, the emerging view of organizations as pluralistic arenas suggest that actors to-be entrepreneurs can actually negotiate, bargain and vie for resources necessary to push their projects and ideas. Paraphrasing Erwin Goffman, actors are not simply “cultural dopes” embedded in a single field. Yet, actors –including individuals and organizations– can be seen as sitting at the nexus of overlapping institutional logics and structures (Friedland and Alford, 1991; Seo and Creed, 2002). Our analysis illustrates how two organizations are in fact better seen as pluralistic venues in which different groups vie for resources and to gather support for their initiatives (Kraatz & Block, 2007). This is, in fact, an important insight present in the work of corporate entrepreneurship researchers who focus on processes (Burgelman, 1983; Floyd and Lane, 2000). Yet, we believe that the institutional literature, and in particular some of the current developments that take a more power and organization-centric approaches, offer lenses to complete what the corporate literature proposes when observing entrepreneurship within organizations.

Furthermore, the importance of communication and discourse adaptation between the various partners strikes us out of these institutional entrepreneurship examples. Institutional entrepreneurs must be skilled actors (Fligstein, 1997; Perkmann and Spicer, 2007: 962). Dave and Christopher exerted power over the field at a particular time to seize opportunities (Battilana, 2006; Maguire et al, 2004: 658). They adopted the following strategies: persuasive argumentation, political negotiation, the network of a variety of stakeholders, the framing of problems in emerging fields. Furthermore, they had –or managed- to mobilize sufficient resources in their respective jobs to realize the interests that they value highly (DiMaggio, 1988: 13) which consists in a social value.
An important element that came out from our analysis is the importance of sense-making and sense-giving (Mair and Marti, 2009). The work of the institutional entrepreneur can be seen as continuously requiring sensemaking of the “contradictions, ambiguities and gaps” (Weber & Glynn, 2006: 1653) that are inherent in the institutional context. Similarly, sensemaking can also result in the reinterpretation or demise of long-held beliefs and schemes (Creed, Scully & Austin, 2002; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998) and their substitution with new ones.

How free are actors to pursue their own projects in the face of institutions even if done for the benefit of the organization per se? We have seen through the analysis of two institutions in Quebec that actors need to gain legitimacy from external stakeholders and also possess an official role within the organization giving them access to a certain liberty to negotiate externally in order to create or to transform an institution.

Both actors argued that they not only maintained the core values of their organizations but they were in fact contributing to their improvement. And to do so, they were motivated to encounter constraints and arduous negotiation, even endure some negative relations at work to promote their deepest values which imply giving through an innovative project the access to knowledge and business opportunities to the business community. These values are above anything else, they push further the goal of the initial institution; they transform existing institutional relations with their very strong ability to network with different partners. “To be qualified as institutional entrepreneurs, individuals must break with existing rules and practices associated with the dominant institutional logic and institutionalize the alternative rules, practices or logics” (Garud & Karnoe, 2003). We believe that this is an important point that deserves further attention. Dave and Christophe can be seen as exerting creative or productive resistance (Courpasson, et al., 2008; Marquis and Lounsbury, 2007). Both institutional entrepreneurs resisted and reacted in order to help their organizations to perform better and to better achieve their goals–often neglected. We believe that paying attention to these processes is important and promises to offer important managerial implications. Again, we think the idea of creative or productive resistance resonates and can enrich Burgelman’s (1983) concepts of organizational championing and delineation.

Existing research on institutional entrepreneurship has emphasized that “institutional entrepreneurs must occupy positions that allow them to assume the role of champions, orchestrate efforts towards collective action, and establish stable sequences of interactions with other actors” (Garud et al, 2002). Our two institutional entrepreneurs possess social, democratic and egalitarian objectives for the society. They believe in collective action. They probably had an influence from the context they lived in, and their professional experience anchored in a diversity of experiences. This explains partly their openness to new practices and desire for change. Both also have problems being at the same time creator and enforcer. This tension points to the necessity of having creators and mobilizers (Hwang & Powell, 2005). They are good to put ideas forward and excellent to build coalition around these ideas. They frame stories that help induce cooperation from people to appeal to their interests and goals (Seo & Creed, 2002). Central to institutional theory is the assumption that humans have a preference for certainty and predictability in organizational life (Zucker, 1977; DiMaggio, 1988). Individuals preferences for relatively routinized and predictable environments generate much behaviour that tend to create and sustain institutions. We find in the literature that a true entrepreneur is a doer (Miner, 1997). We would contribute to this that an institutional entrepreneur is more of a creator than a doer. Both actors in this story are creators that know how to make the organization and its resources work in order to realize
dreams to benefit the society at large. Through their ability to recognize problems in the field, they build cooperation among other actors and can eventually alter deeply embedded norms and values or practices (Hardy & Maguire, 2007). As institutional entrepreneurs, they demonstrated “unique political and social skills including the ability to induce cooperation among others” (Hardy & Maguire, 2007:24). The capacity to prevail over opposition and over the absence of organizational support was possible especially because of the network support around the various projects.

Finally, our study also illustrates what we consider to be a common and important limitation of most empirical accounts of institutional entrepreneurship. Following DiMaggio’s (1988) early insights, the focus of such accounts has often been put on the role of powerful actors with abundant resources. That seems to be at odds with one of the fundamental building blocks of entrepreneurship research (Burgelman, 1983; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000; Stevenson and Jarillo, 1989). However, while some might see a contradiction here, we believe that it reveals first an understandable effort by institutionalists to avoid heroic views of entrepreneurs and, second, a neglect to pay attention to how actors allegedly less powerful and with limited resources do actually work to promote institutional change (Lawrence, 2008; Marti and Mair, 2009; Scott, 1985). Accordingly, we see once again potential for cross-fertilization and we believe that this study gives a step into that direction by analyzing –very much following early insights from Burgelman (1983) but also recent developments by institutionalists (Kraatz and Block, 2007) – how organizations, organizational structures and bits and pieces of the institutional context (Schneiberg, 2007) do offer resources for potential entrepreneurs.
References


