

Perpetuating Entrepreneurship through Dialogue

- A Social Constructionist View -

Chris Steyaert

Perpetuating Entrepreneurship through Dialogue

- A Social Constructionist View -

Chris Steyaert

A Dissertation for the Doctor's Degree in Psychology
Promotor: Prof. dr. R. Bouwen

Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences
Department of Work and Organizational Psychology
Katholieke Universiteit Leuven
1995

Only let me say, that to my mind there is a great field of science which is as yet quite closed to us. I refer to the science which proceeds in terms of life and is established on data of living experience and of sure intuition. Call it subjective science if you like. Our objective science of modern knowledge concerns itself only with phenomena, and with phenomena as regarded in their cause-and-effect relationship. I have nothing to say against our science. It is perfect as far as it goes. But to regard it as exhausting the whole scope of human possibility in knowledge seems to me just puerile. Our science is a science of the dead world.

D.H. Lawrence, 1921

Translation by Stratton Bull
Design by Triumvira[a]t
Photography by Guy Steyaert

Department of Work and Organizational Psychology
Tiensestraat 102
B-3000 Leuven
BELGIUM

voor mijn ouders, voor mijn broer.
to all entrepreneurs of life.

Steyaert, C. (1995). *Perpetuating Entrepreneurship through Dialogue. A Social Constructionist View.* A Dissertation for the Doctor's Degree in Psychology. Promotor : Prof. dr. René Bouwen.

Summary

A doctoral text is a dialogue between writer and reader, writer and other authors, academic and literary players researcher and everyday life experiences. In this case in the context of high techs, it is a dialogue between experience and meaning, which are generated from scientific and common sense perspectives. Such a dialogic context is set up in the beginning, the middle, and at the end of this text.

In this doctorate the organizing process of small high tech firms is studied from a social constructionist perspective. With the rise of new technologies in informatics, telecommunications, electronics, and biology, and of the third industrial revolution in general, a great number of 'high techs' in small scaled contexts have been started up. One of the main concerns has been how these entrepreneurial firms would organize themselves in order to sustain their innovative projects over the long term, limited as they are by financial and social resources. These firms often started from individual innovative activities by one or two entrepreneurs, evolving towards a larger size, with innovative actions becoming collective as a consequence. Their central problem of anticipating the fast rhythm of technological changes has presented two interwoven organizing tasks: 1) to find an organizational form which maintains and fosters their continuous innovation; and 2) to make the transition from an individual initiative towards a collective search process. The aim of this doctoral project is to describe the organizing processes which make the transition from individual initiative towards organizational entrepreneurship possible. The anchoring of the problem formulation in the entrepreneurship domain and in organization theory is developed in *chapter one.*

In *chapter two* social constructionism is introduced as a conceptual framework for studying the organizing process of entrepreneurship in general and for approaching our problem formulation concerning the continuation of collective creativity in particular. Social constructionism is an emerging theoretical perspective within psychology, organization studies, and the social sciences in general. The social constructionist voice is explored in three successive movements: first, by framing its development inside and outside psychology, which allows us to formulate its main directions and persuasions; second, by elaborating on the narrative dimension of sensemaking, which creates a self-reflexivity on the meaning of the central concept of meaning; and third, by formulating a process theory of organizing in which the centrality of social processes is elucidated. In this view of entrepreneurship as social construction, it is suggested that entrepreneuring is a collective process of sensemaking in which different parties create meaning through social interaction and narrative practices. Through the exploration of this social constructionist perspective, I conclude by formulating the research persuasions and by rediscussing the research questions: (1) how can entrepreneurial organizations perpetuate their creative point of departure and moving spirit? (2) how can we understand the development and change of meaning configurations as social processes which characterize the evolution of entrepreneurial organizations aiming at perpetuated innovating?

The research methodology, addressed in *chapter three*, tries to account for the pragmatics of the research trajectory and for the researcher's learning process through which he or she finds a paradigmatic position of his or her own.

Steyaert, C. (1995). *Ondernemerschap Bestendigen via Dialoog: een Sociaal Constructionistische Benadering.* Proefschrift aangeboden tot het verkrijgen van de graad van Doctor in de Psychologie. Promotor: Prof. dr. René Bouwen.

Samenvatting

Een proefschrift is een ontmoeting tussen schrijver en lezer, een gesprek tussen schrijver en andere schrijvers, een conversatie tussen academische en literaire auteurs, een dialoog tussen onderzoekservaringen en ervaringen van alledag. In deze studie van hoogtechnologische bedrijven gaat het om een dialoog tussen ervaring en betekenis, die allebei zowel vanuit een wetenschappelijk standpunt als vanuit een *common sense* perspectief worden gegenereerd. Ruimte voor zo'n dialoog wordt gecreëerd bij het begin, in het midden, en op het einde van dit proefschrift.

In dit onderzoeksproject wordt het organisatieproces van hoogtechnologische bedrijven bestudeerd vanuit een sociaal constructionistisch perspectief. Met de opkomst van de nieuwe informatica-, telecom-, elektronica-, en biotechnologieën, en de derde industriële revolutie in het algemeen, werden tal van *high techs* in een kleinschalige context in het begin van de jaren tachtig opgestart. Eén van de belangrijke vragen hierbij was hoe deze ondernemers-bedrijven zich zouden organiseren om hun vernieuwingsprojecten op lange termijn vol te houden, beperkt als ze zijn qua financiële en menselijke middelen. Veelal zijn ze gestart als een individueel, vernieuwend initiatief van één of twee ondernemers, maar evolueerden ze naar een grotere omvang, waardoor de innovatieve actie wordt gecollectiviseerd. Hun centraal probleem om het snelle ritme van technologische veranderingen voor te blijven, leidt tot twee in elkaar verweven organiseertaken: (1) een organiseervorm vinden die deze continue innovatie mogelijk maakt en ondersteunt, en (2) een overgang maken van een individueel initiatief naar een collectief zoekproces. Dit doctoraal project probeert dan ook een beschrijving te geven van de organisatieprocessen die de overgang van een individueel initiatief naar een organisationeel ondernemerschap mogelijk maken. De verankering van de probleemstelling in het ondernemersdomein en de organisatietheorie wordt in het *eerste hoofdstuk* uitgewerkt.

In *hoofdstuk twee* wordt het sociaal constructionisme voorgesteld als een conceptueel raamwerk om het organiseerproces van het ondernemerschap in het algemeen te bestuderen, en om onze probleemstelling betreffende het bestendigen van collectieve creativiteit meer in het bijzonder te benaderen. Sociaal constructionisme is een opkomend theoretisch perspectief binnen de psychologie, organisatiestudies, en de sociale wetenschappen in het algemeen. De stem van het sociaal constructionisme wordt in drie opeenvolgende bewegingen verkend: ten eerste wordt de ontwikkeling binnen en buiten de psychologie geschetst, wat ons toelaat de belangrijkste overtuigingen te formuleren; ten tweede wordt ingegaan op de narratieve dimensie van betekenisgeving, waardoor een zelfreflectie ontstaat op de betekenis van betekenis, wat hier als een centraal concept wordt gezien; en ten derde wordt een procestheorie van het organiseren geformuleerd, waarin het belang van sociale processen toegelicht wordt. In deze benadering van ondernemerschap als sociale constructie wordt gesuggereerd dat ondernemen een collectief betekenisgevingsproces is, waarin verschillende betrokken partijen betekenis geven via sociale interactie en narratieve praktijken. In functie van dit sociaal constructionistisch perspectief formuleer ik bij wijze van besluit de onderzoeksovertuigingen en herformuleer ik de onderzoeksvragen: (1) hoe kunnen ondernemersorganisaties hun creatief vertrekpunt en hun drijfkracht bestendigen? en (2) hoe kunnen we de ontwikkeling en verandering van betekenis configuraties opvatten als sociale processen?

The chapter is structured around the research circle, focusing on (1) how we enter this circle, (2) data generation through narrative and phenomenological interviews in three Flemish high tech firms, (3) data analysis using the principles of interpretive grounded theory and the construction of meaning configurations, a method developed for the purpose of this research, and (4) the writing of a research report, which is a creative, narrative and rhetorical discursive practice. This description of our methodological approach is preceded by an exploratory examination of the paradigmatical position of qualitative research in the social sciences and in the entrepreneurship domain in particular, and is followed by a pragmatic legitimation directed to different interpretive communities and proceeding intersubjectively.

Chapter four presents the answer to the initial research question, for which three theoretical notions are developed: 'dilemma', 'texture', and 'potential space'. Firstly, it is argued that the organizing process of small innovative firms can be characterized by a basic dilemma between 'creating and integrating', in which five organizational subdilemmas can be distinguished. Continued creativity is here seen as learning to deal with dilemmas. Secondly, this dilemma is elaborated through a descriptive, theoretical framework, in which the organizing process is characterized by two major transitions: (1) the development of the entrepreneurial motivation towards a social network; and (2) the development of the core competency towards a task domain. Both processes are interwoven through a form of dialogue, and a second theoretical notion, 'texture', is introduced to describe subtly how dilemmas can be dealt with as a means of creating organizational texture. Thirdly, the notion of 'potential space', which is used to interpret the case stories, suggests how the perpetuation of collective creativity requires activities which maintain and nurture such a developmental space. Furthermore, the concepts of 'texture' and 'potential space' direct us towards the notion of 'thirdness', which invites us to research the development of small innovative firms as a relational and social phenomenon. This is the focus of chapter five.

In *chapter five* the evolution of high tech firms is presented as the development and change of meaning configurations. Firstly, it is documented through a review of both historical and more recent psychological literature which holds that meaning configurations are primarily of a social nature. Secondly, this discussion is firmy rooted in the field of organization studies, with the comparison between cognitive maps and meaning configurations as the most substantial pretext. Thirdly, the development of the high tech firms is presented as a narrative structured around interpretive grounded concepts and meaning configurations. Finally, a theoretical interpretation of the stories of Vision and Quartet is developed on the basis of Bakhtin's idea of dialogic meaning creation. This is the central (hypo)thesis of our study: continuing creativity collectively requires a Bakhtinian dialogue among the different interpretive repertoires, the so-called voices. This thesis stresses the importance of 'difference' in the organizing process, gives a more critical view of the concept of 'sharedness', and suggests important tools for elaborating and concretizing the social dimension of organizing as 'conversation'. The idea of dialogue fits the theater metaphor of organization, and reinstates the dramaturgical version of social constructionism which was one of its most important instigators. The art of continuous collective creativity thus aims to leave no voice out of the dialogue on the entrepreneurial stage.

In *chapter six* theoretical, practical, and epistemological implications are drawn, based on the way this study has been conceived.

De onderzoeksmethode, beschreven in *hoofdstuk drie*, probeert een verantwoording te geven voor de praktijk van het onderzoekstraject en het leerproces van de onderzoeker waardoor hij of zij een eigen paradigmatische positie kan vinden. Het hoofdstuk is opgebouwd rond een onderzoekscirkel, en concentreert zich op (1) de vraag hoe we die cirkel binnentreden, (2) datageneratie via narratieve en fenomenologische interviews in drie Vlaamse *high tech*-bedrijven,
(3) data-analyse waarbij gebruik gemaakt werd van de principes van de interpretatieve gefundeerde theoriebenadering en de constructie van betekenis configuraties, een methode die voor dit onderzoek werd ontwikkeld, (4) het schrijven van een onderzoeksrapport, hetgeen een creatieve, narratieve en retorische praktijk is. Deze beschrijving van onze methodologische werkwijze wordt voorafgegaan door een verkennend onderzoek van de paradigmatische positie van een kwalitatieve benadering in de sociale wetenschappen en meer in het bijzonder in het ondernemersdomein, en wordt gevolgd door een pragmatische en intersubjectieve legitimatie die zich richt tot verschillende interpretatieve gemeenschappen.

Hoofdstuk vier geeft antwoord op de initiële onderzoeksvraag, door drie theoretische begrippen te ontwikkelen: 'dilemma', textuur', en 'potentiële ruimte'. Ten eerste wordt betoogd dat het organiseerproces van kleine vernieuwende bedrijven gekenmerkt wordt door een basisdilemma tussen creëren en integreren, waarbinnen vijf subdilemma's onderscheiden worden. Bestendigde creativiteit wordt hier beschouwd als leren omgaan met dilemma's. Ten tweede wordt dit dilemma uitgewerkt via een descriptief, theoretisch raamwerk, waarin het organiseerproces gekenmerkt wordt door twee belangrijke transities: (1) de ontwikkeling van een ondernemersmotivatie naar een sociaal netwerk, (2) de ont-wikkeling van de kerncompetentie naar een taakdomein. Beide processen worden in elkaar verweven via een dialoog. Een tweede theoretisch begrip, 'textuur', wordt voorgesteld om subtiel te beschrijven hoe met dilemma's omgegaan kan worden als een manier om een organisatietextuur te creëren. Ten derde, het begrip 'potentiële ruimte' - dat gebruikt wordt om de *case stories* te interpreteren - suggereert dat de bestendiging van collectieve creativiteit activiteiten vereist die zo'n ontwikkelingsruimte openhouden en koesteren. Bovendien wijzen de concepten 'textuur' en 'potentiële ruimte' ons in de richting van het begrip '*thirdness*', hetgeen ons uitnodigt de ontwikkeling van kleine vernieuwende bedrijven te onderzoeken als relationele en sociale fenomenen.

In *hoofdstuk vijf* wordt de evolutie van hoogtechnologische bedrijven voorgesteld als de ontwikkeling en verandering van betekenis configuraties. Ten eerste wordt op basis van zowel historische als van meer recente psychologische teksten aangetoond dat betekenis configuraties in de eerste plaats sociaal van aard zijn. Ten tweede wordt deze discussie verankerd in het domein van organisatiestudies door een vergelijking te maken tussen cognitieve kaarten en betekenis configuraties. Ten derde wordt de ontwikkeling van *high tech* bedrijven voorgesteld via een verhaal waarin interpretatieve gefundeerde concepten en betekenis configuraties als structurerende elementen fungeren. Tenslotte, wordt een theoretische interpretatie ontwikkeld van de verhalen van *Vision* en *Quartet* op basis van Bakhtins opvatting van dialogische betekeniscreatie. Dit is de centrale (hypo)these van deze studie: creativiteit collectief bestendigen vergt een Bakhtineaanse dialoog tussen de verschillende interpretatieve repertoires, die hier stemmen genoemd worden. Deze these benadrukt het belang van 'verschil' in het organiseerproces, geeft een kritischer visie op het begrip 'gedeelde betekenis', en suggereert belangrijke *tools* om de sociale dimensie van organiseren als 'conversatie' uit te werken en te concretiseren. Deze opvatting van dialoog past binnen de theatermetafoor van organisatie en herwaardeert de dramatische versie van het sociaal constructionisme. De kunst van bestendigde collectieve creativiteit beoogt dus dat geen enkele stem wordt uitgesloten van de dialoog die zich afspeelt op de ondernemersscène.

In *hoofdstuk zes* worden theoretische, praktische en epistemologische implicaties geformuleerd op basis van onze onderzoeksbenadering.

Looking Forward?

Do we not all dream of a text the glistening surface of whose pages bears our desires intact and maintains their dignity?

Jacques Derrickere, 1986

At the beginning of a newly opened book, whether a novella, a novel, an essay, or (one would hope) even a dissertation, the *reader* begins to read with light curiosity, and sometimes with burning expectation: What's in store? Where is this text taking me? A reader looks ahead. Literally. But he or she also looks toward ... figuratively, the way we say 'I am looking forward'. To meeting you. Out of excitement, displeasure, or duty. The printed text, finalized material, is an empty space, an open zone, that a reader slowly fills in with enthusiasm, with fatigue, with pleasure. The virtual text is written by the reader, who performs a complex play of connecting, associating, and interpreting. The reader no longer looks only forward, but stands still, falters, and looks increasingly behind. The reader is not an Orpheus, punished with lovelessness. A dynamic alteration follows between forwards and backwards, between back and forth, between moving on and lagging behind, between the filled-in and the yet-to-be filled-in, between dream and memory, a quest above and below the surface of the page. The exertion of reading increases, the circle is closed. Not a straightforward reading journey. The reader travels. Not a linear travelogue. Until the text has been read, and re-written. And until looking forward and looking back overlap one another. While the eyes scrape at the text, while the memory dabbles, and feeling blots the ink.

A *writer*, at the portal of the act of writing, looks forward. With contained inspiration. With the urgency of the over-prepared runner. With knives drawn. Still with a pose of invulnerability, as if it were an *avant-première*. Eye to eye with the as yet intact paper, the empty document. Sometimes unsure. Like the painter staring fearfully at a blank canvas.[1] Convinced and convincing, matching step with scientific rhetoric, or sometimes going against the grain. The writer makes tracks which are not erased, drawn towards the horizon that he or she must find. The writer writes forwards, in search of the text. But then again not. Writing in circles. The writer lives between texts, reads as he writes, writes as she reads. Texts that come and go, are just barely discovered, are sometimes simply presented. The writer is caught by surprise and is plotted against. The writer crosses out, re-writes, integrates, structures. Makes a sample version, a pre-publication, a consultation on spec. The writer cannot actually look forward, anticipate, and predict what's coming, nor control providence. A dissertation is in the first place a text. A way of coming up with a story as researcher, as reader, as author. It is not a neutral report or a synthetic set of directions for the delivered work, not an all but superfluous reportage. A dissertation is many styles at once: report, story, metaphor, citation of speech, and written word, synthesis, table, *bricolage*, in which all sorts of voices are raised. A polyphonic story, selected by a hand which itself changes by making contact. The dissertation is in the dock, in this *fin-de-siècle* time which questions, puts under pressure, deconstructs the text itself. Scientificity and narrativity, linearity (from hypothesis to conclusion), and circularity are weighed in the balance. The dissertation with or without an author.

The reader and the writer, the writer and the reader meet one another initially in the foreword, this customary pre-construction, sometimes a reconstruction, or even a de-construction, to slip some words in before the words, or some text to go with the text, as a reflection on the process of reading and writing. Together, they look forward, the reader at the beginning, the writer (often) at the (provisional) end-point. Towards the theme (Continuing Collective Creativity). Towards the problem formulation (How to Perpetuate Entrepreneurship). Towards the theoretical approach (Social Constructionism). Towards methodology (Qualitative Research). They meander through the table of contents. Six chapters. The construction. Their logic. Their length. The reference list is perused at close range. Here the writer openly acknowledges the reader, 'I am written. As a writer, I am immersed in language and the books of others'. This text bears and forbears others. The foreword delays the text for awhile, the act of reading is put off just a little longer. Until this moment, the act of reading is predictable and safe, the rest is adventure. The essay may be assayed.

A writer writes/has written. In the hope that the reader, for a moment, looks up.

[1] ..although Vincent van Gogh adds in a letter to his brother : "*The blank canvas is afraid of the true passionate painter.*"

Contents[1]

Fragments are the only forms I trust

Donald Barthelme, 1968

Summary 8
Samenvatting 9

Looking Forward? 12

Contents 15

List of Figures 25

Chapter One
Entrepreneurs and Organizations: a Meeting of Strangers?

[Guide-line] 27

Fragment One.
Paradise Lost? Introductory Problem Formulation 29
Organizing Young Innovative Firms: Problem Formulation 29
Focusing the Research Field: towards a Definition of Entrepreneurship 30
Entrepreneurship - a Hard-To-Define Phenomenon 30
Art, Play, and High Tech Firms: Creativity As the Core of Collective Innovative Entrepreneurship 34
Anchoring the Problem Formulation: a Meeting between the Entrepreneurial Domain and Organization Theory 37
Conclusion: a Meeting of Strangers 41

Fragment Two.
The Organization Library, or, the Pleasure of the Organization Text 43
Libraries and Labyrinths 43
A Guided Tour 45
Visit One: Science As Literature 45
Visit Two: the Name of the Library 49
Visit Three: Organizing a Library 52
Visit Four: Organizing a Library, a Few Remarks 54

Fragment Three.
Organizations As 'Flux', or, You Never Step Twice in the Same Organization 59

[1] "The index of a text, then, is not only an instrument of reference; it is itself a text, a second text which is the *relief* (remainder and asperity) of the first : what is wandering (interrupted) in the rationality of the sentences."
R. Barthes, 1975.

The Flow of Knowledge 59
The Flow of Reality: Philosophical Traces 60
Heraclitus and the River 60
Process Philosophy in Whitehead and Hartshorne 61
The Flow of Organizing: towards a Process Theory of Organization 63
You Never Step Twice into the Same Organization 63
The Need for a Process Language: 'Organization' Becomes 'Organizing' 64
Dilemmas As the Dynamics of the Organizing Process 65
The Event as Central to the Organizing Process 66
Beyond Entity-Thinking 67
Conclusion: the Way in Is Also the Way Out 68

Fragment Four.
Into the Strange World of Entrepreneurship: between Academy and Alchemy 71
Entrepreneurship: a Young Discipline in Search of Progress and an Identity of Its Own? 71
How Do You Organize a Young Academic Discipline? 72
The Exciting Rise of Entrepreneurship Research: a Major Dilemma... 79
A Meeting Between Two Libraries: Implications 80
Towards a Process Study of Entrepreneurship: Entrepreneuring 81
Opening the Entrepreneurship Library 83
The Entrepreneur on the Proscenium 84

Chapter Two
Entrepreneurship As Social and Narrative Sensemaking

[Guide-line] 95

Fragment Five.
Constructing a Conceptual Framework and Developing Theory 97
Towards a Pragmatic Account of Theory Development 97
The Necessity of a Conceptual Framework That Can Move 98
Pragmatic Principles in Theory Formation 100
A Critical View of the Grounded Theory Approach 100
Abduction and the Usable Hypothesis 102
Local Theories 103
Of Metaphors and Mini-theories 105
From Theory Generation to Generative Theory 106

Fragment Six.
The Birth, Biography, and Bibliography of Social Constructionism: a 'Blurred' Review 109
Visiting the Family Library: a Bibliographical Introduction to Social Constructionism 109
Re-presenting Social Constructionism: a Search for Appropriate Metaphors? 110
A Key to the Library 110
In Search of Metaphors 111
A Blurred Review 112
The Birth of Social Constructionism 113
Ancestors and Relatives 113
Who Are the Parents? 117
The Child's Godfather 118
Introducing Gergen's Work 119
Social Constructionism in Psychology: Comparing Two Versions 120
The Child's Names 123
The Child's Voice: First Cries and Other Grown-up Talk 125

Fragment Seven.
Reading Meaning: a Narrative View 131
A Sense of Meaning Is Like a Sense of Humor 131
Narrativity and Cultural Psychology 133
Cultural Psychology and Organizations 133
Bruner's Vision of Narrative Psychology 135
Characterizing Narrative Sensemaking 138
Understanding Narrative Reality Construction 138
How Do We Tell Stories?: Constructing Narratives 141
Towards a Narrative View of Entrepreneurship 144

Fragment Eight.
Karl Weick and the Process of Sensemaking 147
***The Social Psychology of Organizing* by Karl Weick** 147
The Way towards an Organizational Theory 149
The Organizational Process As Enactment/Selection/Retention 150
Enactment by 'Bracketing' 152
Selection via 'Retrospective Sensemaking' 154
Retention through 'Discrediting' 155
Organizing As a Social Process 157
Weick's Vision of the Social Dimension of Organizing 157
Further Developments in Organizing As a Social Process: the Theory of Social Integration 160

Fragment Nine.
The Research Question Revisited: a Social Constructionist Conceptualization 163
A Social Constructionist Approach within this Research Project: Selecting and Formulating Directions and Persuasions 164
Summarizing Three Readings of the Social Construction of Reality 164
Visiting the Library of Social Constructionism 164
A Narrative Construction of Reality 164
A Social Psychology of Organizing 165
Guided by Four Persuasions 166
Research Questions Revisited through 'Process Language' 167

Chapter Three
Between Paradigm and Practice: a Dialogical Account of the Research Methodology

[Guide-line] 179

Fragment Ten.
Traveling along the Circle of Research 181
On the Road 181
Describing the Circle of Research 184
In Operational Terms 184
The Metaphorical Sense 188

Fragment Eleven.
Positioning a Qualitative Research Methodology in the Study of Entrepreneurship 193
The Status of Qualitative Research 193
A Closer Look at the Status of Qualitative Research 195
A Qualitative Research Method, Not Bounded by, but Still Anchored in Its Discipline 195
The Tension between Pragmatic and Paradigmatic Accounts 196
Opening up the Qualitative Methodology in Entrepreneurship Research 198
Research Methods in Entrepreneurship 198
Methodological Practices of a Young Discipline: beyond 'Exploration' 198
The Interpretative 'Voice' in Entrepreneurship Research 200
Methodological Alternatives from a Social Constructionist Point of View 201
Using Organizational Ethnography 201
Stimulating a Further Direct Link with Practice 203
Towards an Interpretative Approach to Entrepreneurship Research 204

Fragment Twelve.
Generating and Collecting Data through Phenomenological and Storytelling Interviews 207
Conducting Interviews for Organizational Research 207
The Interview As Organizational Ethnography 207
Enacting Research Through Interviews 208
Why Interviews in this Research Project? 208
Generating or Collecting Data? 209
A Typology of Qualitative Interviews 211
Interviews: Structured or Not? 211
Interview Classified According to the Nature of the Interaction 213
Phenomenological Interviews: the Notion of 'Shared Concern' 214
The Narrative Interview: Telling Stories 217
Questioning the Questioning Process 217
The Narrative Interview: Mediating Interventions 218
Conclusion: Open Dialogue as the Core of Interviewing 219

Fragment Thirteen.
Data Analysis and Interpretation through Interpretive Grounded Theory, Meaning Configurations, and Storytelling 221
Introduction 221
Analysis Operations 221
Transcribing and Reading through the Texts 222
Formulating and Connecting Concepts 222
Constructing Second-Order Concepts or Meaning Configurations 224
Making Synthetic Interpretations through Comparison 225
Reflections on the Process of Analyzing and Interpreting 226
Beyond Grounded Theory 227
The Interpretive Embeddedness of Data Analysis 228
Defining the Interpretive Step 230
Connecting Interpreting and Reporting 232
Conclusion: the Discursive Future of 'Meaning Analysis' 233

Fragment Fourteen.
The Text and the Reporting of Research 235
The Birth of a Text 235
The Text Persuades 237
Texts As Stories 239
The Truth of a Research Report 243
The Dissertation As Text 246
Envoi: the Role of the Reader... 246

Fragment Fifteen.
Research Evaluation As a Legitimation Process 249
Introduction: Evaluation and the Legitimation Process 249
Legitimation through Research Criteria: a Question of Perspective 251
Pragmatic Legitimation: Dialogical Intersubjectivity 254
Research As a Meeting between Different 'Interpretive Communities' 254
Intersubjectivity As a Pragmatic Criterion 256
Creating a Frame for Intersubjective Evaluation 256
Evaluation through Dialogue 257
Legitimizing this Project 259
The Research Circle in the Field Community 260
The Research Circle in the Academic Community 263
Back Home: a Personal Legitimation 264

Appendix 269

Middle Fragment (Entracte).
Looking Around...

Chapter Four
Between Creating and Integrating: Construing Organizational Texture in Entrepreneurial Firms

[Guide-line] 283

Fragment Sixteen.
The Organizational Dilemma of Entrepreneuring: Creating and Integrating 285
Introduction: a Brief Recapitulation 285
Organizing Entrepreneurship through Five Dilemmas 286
Motivation Dilemma 286
Root Dilemma 288
Route Dilemma 290
Time Dilemma 291
Management/Non-management Dilemma 292
Towards a Basic Organizational Dilemma 293
Further Legitimizing of the Creating/Integrating Dilemma 295
Empirical Legitimation: Three Case Comparisons 295
The Coat Case 295
Comparing with a Swedish Research Case 299
Comparing with a French High Tech Firm 300
Conclusion: the Dilemmatic Nature of Innovative Entrepreneurship and 'Organizing Forms' 301
A Surprising Proposition? 301
Still, a Surprising Proposition 303

Fragment Seventeen.
Construing an Organizational Texture: Weft and Warp 305
Introduction: a Brief Recapitulation 305
The Quartet case: 'And Then There Were Four' 306
From Entrepreneurial Motivation to Social Network 306
From the 'Gene Pool' to the Construction of a Task Domain 309
Organizational Texture: Weft and Warp 312
Conclusion 314
A Further Illustration: The World According to Vision 316
A Major Event in the Case Story: a New Entrepreneur 316
An Interpretive Chart of the Development of Vision 318
Conclusion 322
Towards a Hypothetical Theoretical Chart 322
Valuing the Interpretive Chart 323
Summarizing Our Further Research Trajectory 325

Fragment Eighteen.
The Innovative High Tech Firm As a 'Potential Space' 327
Interpreting Case Stories in Terms of the Concept of Potential Space 327
Potential Space: an Overarching Concept? 327
Winnicott and Organization Theory 327
Potential Space: a Process Concept? 328
Perpetuating Entrepreneurship through Potential Space 329
Between Creating and Integrating: a Potential Space? 329
Case Illustrations 330
Related Concepts 332
Implications 336
Towards a Notion of 'Thirdness' 336
Towards a Relational View of Development 337
Dealing with Dilemmas: the Role of the Third 338
Six Strategies to Deal with Dilemmas 338
Within the Polarity 338
Beyond the Polarity 339
Taking the Third Seriously 341
The Notion of Trialectics 341
The Third Organization 342

Chapter Five
Between Individual and Organizational Meaning Configurations: Creating and Changing Collectively Meaning Through Dialogue

[Guide-line] 353

Fragment Nineteen.
Meaning Configurations in the Organizational Conversation: Reviewing the Notion of 'Shared Meaning' 355
Is There a Need for Shared Meaning? 355
Conversation Seen in Terms of the Theater Metaphor: Dialogue 357
Organization As Theater 357
A Dramaturgical Version of Social Constructionism 359
The Drama of Entrepreneurship 360

Fragment Twenty.
From Basics to Rhetorics: the Social Nature of Meaning Configurations 363
About and Beyond Cognitivism 363
Historical Precursors and Pioneers 365
William James (1842-1910) and the 'Vague' 365
Frederic Bartlett (1886-1969) and the 'Social' 366
Pragmatist Considerations: Herbert Mead (1863-1931) and the 'New' 368
Soviet Psychology: Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) and the 'Developmental' 371
The Social Foundation of Cognition in Current Psychology 373
Cognition and Memory As Social Processes 374

Shotter and the Rhetorical Quality of Cognitions 375
Conclusion: 377
The Primacy of the 'Interpsychological' 377
The Becoming of the Young Firm and Mediational Means 378
How to Conceive of the Social Interspace? 378

Fragment Twenty-one.
Positioning Meaning Configurations 381
Moving the Debate on Cognitions to Organization Studies 381
A Cognitive Approach of the Organizing Process 381
Gioia's Confession: an Illustration 383
Positioning Meaning Configurations 385
The Trouble with 'Cognitive Maps' 386
Rethinking Cognitive Maps through Meaning Configurations 388

Fragment Twenty-two.
The Development and Change of Meaning Configurations: A Tale of Two Firms 391
Introduction: a Short Recapitulation 391
The Story of Vision: a Re-vision - From a Deep Valley to 'Picking Cherries' 392
The Story So Far 392
Continuing the Configuration 393
The Tenth Anniversary: a Family Celebration 393
Recreating: a Voice from the First Days 395
'Our Team' 399
The World (According to Vision) We Live In 405
Looking Back: Paradise and the Sound of Modesty 408
Patience on the Way to Paradise 408
Focus and Ballast 410
Self-presentation 412
Ticket to Paradise? - Reprise 415
The Story of Quartet: from Four to One - Quartet Goes Solo 416
The Story So Far 416
A New Entrepreneur... A New Start... A New Meaning Configuration 417
In the Middle of the Network: a New Actor 417
The Voice of Integration: Focusing the Task Domain 418
Finally, Professionalism Instead of Friendship 419
Authority and Diversity 421
The Rupture with the 'Old' Configuration 422
A Tension-Filled Transition 422
The Soul or the Ghost of the Entrepreneur 424
Conclusion: Quartet - A Solo Play? 426
Monologue and Rhetoric 426
Recession: Us against the World 427
Epilogue 427

Fragment Twenty-three.
The Dialogue A Social Constructionist Key 429
Dialogue and Conversation 430
The Dialogue in Bakhtin 430
Literal Meaning Does Not Constitute a Point of Departure for a Theory of Meaning 430
Meaning Is Socio-Culturally Situated 433
The text is both univocal and dialogic 434
Discourse Can Be Both Authoritative and Internally Persuasive 435
The Idea of Conversation in 'Other' Bakhtins: De Dijn and Oakeshott 436
Organization Dialogues: the Multivoiced Organization 439
Beyond an Instrumental vision of Communication in Organization Theory 439
Towards an Organizing Theory of Multivoicedness 441
Entrepreneurship as a Dialogic Process 444
Entrepreneurship As Dialogic: a Reinterpretation of Case Narratives 444
Polyphony As a Means of Perpetuating Creativity 446
Meaning Configurations: Interpretive Repertoires, Language Games, and Social Languages 446
Polyphony: a Linking Text? 447
Illustrations 449

Chapter Six
Implications and Applications for Entrepreneurial Settings

[Guide-line] 461

Fragment Twenty-four.
Between Research and Theory: Theoretical Implications 463
Connecting Dilemmas, Texture, and Potential Space with Meaning Configurations 463
Creation and Development on the Boundary of Two or More Realities 463
Dealing with Dilemmas: Organizing a Texture and a Potential Space 465
A Dialogical View of Dilemmas: a Generative Effect 465
Towards a Relational View of Creativity 467
Play and Identity Development 467
A New Look at Creativity 468
Between Entrepreneuring and Organizing (Theory) 471
The Entrepreneurial 'Lesson' 471
Revisiting Our Social Constructionist Persuasions 473
The Praxis of Organizing: a Bakhtinian Trajectory? 476

Fragment Twenty-five.
Between Research and Interventions: Implications and Applications for Entrepreneurial Settings 479
Introduction 479

Towards Intervention: Four Reasons 479
The Gap between Research and Practice and How It Can Be Approached: a Short Statement 481
The Sequential Attitude 481
The Parallel Attitude 482
Intervention from a Social Constructionist Perspective: Opening the Conversation towards a Multivoiced Interplay? 483
Introduction: Relating the Entrepreneurial Firm and the Interventionist 483
A Social Constructionist Approach to Intervention 485
Intervention As a Social Construction 485
Intervention As a Bakhtinian Dialogue 485
Interpretive Methodology for Intervention and the Intervention Circle 486
A Research Follow-up of an Intervention in the Organizing Process of a High Tech Firm 488
An Intervention in the Organizing Process: towards Multivoiced Organizing 489
Follow up of the Intervention through the Intervention Circle 490
Starting up the Intervention 490
The Intervention Circle, Revisited 492
An Intake Interview: Reframing the Relationship between Firm and Researcher 492
Interviewing the Actors of the Time Project 493
From Interpreting to Preliminary Reporting 494
Continuing the Intervention Circle 495
Coda: Dialogue as 'Die Kunst des Fragens'? 496

Fragment Twenty-six.
Twenty-five Fragments: Epistemological Implications 501
Fragment? 501
Fragmentation, an Overtone of the Postmodern Era 504
Between Art and Science 504
Conceptions of Fragmentation 506
The Fragment, Barthelme's Literary Form 508
Barthelme and Metafiction 508
From Fiction As Fragment to Dissertations As Fragments? 510
Fragmentation in Organizational Thought... 512
Fragmentation in the Study of Organizational Culture 512
Fragmentation and Organizing Forms of Entrepreneurship 514
And Fragmented Organizational Thinking 515
Fragmented Organizational and Entrepreneurial Theorizing? 515
Contextualism: the Notion of 'Texture' 516
Fragment? - Reprise 519

Looking Back 523

References 533

List of Figures

Figure 6.1. Comparing social constructionist assumptions from 1985 and 1994 126
Figure 7.1. Meaning within in a narrative, creative, rhetoric, semiotic and deconstructionist perspective 132
Figure 8.1. Organizing as a process of sensemaking 151
Figure 8.2. Organizing through a recipe for sensemaking 152
Figure 10.1. The circle of research 185
Figure 11.1. Research assumptions in theories of change and equilibrium 201
Figure 11.2. Situating problem formulation, social constructionist persuasions and research methodology within the circle of research 205
Figure 12.1. Different types of the qualitative research interview 213
Figure 15.1. Research criteria from a positivistic perspective 252
Figure 15.2. Research criteria from an interpretative perspective 253
Figure 15.3. Pragmatic legitimizing: field interpretive communities 260
Figure 15.4. Pragmatic legitimizing: scientific interpretive communities 263
Figure 16.1. The development of the root dilemma in the Vision case 289
Figure 16.2. The route dilemma in the Quartet case 290
Figure 17.1. The development from entrepreneurial motivation to social network in the Quartet case 308
Figure 17.2. Opportunistic versus complementary logic in the Quartet case 311
Figure 17.3. Textural organizing in the Quartet case 313
Figure 17.4. Textural organizing in the Vision case 319
Figure 17.5. A hypothetical theoretical chart of textural organizing 323
Figure 25.1. The circle of intervention 487

List of Appendices

Appendix 12.1. Interventions of the interviewer during a storytelling interview 270
Appendix 13.1. Example of vignette 271
Appendix 13.2. Example of completed vignette 272
Appendix 15.1. Intersubjective legitimation and double notification 273

Entrepreneurs and Organizations: a Meeting of Strangers?

Chapter one

Guideline. This study focuses on the organizational process of entrepreneurial endeavors in a high tech context. Therefore, this chapter sets up a meeting between entrepreneurs and organizations of whom it is often said that their interests, logics and discourses are incompatible, sometimes allergic and in any case foreign to one other.

In *fragment 1*, the problem formulation and research questions are described in broad terms, and then, further elaborated by demarcating the terrain of this study in light of the way phenomena of entrepreneurship are defined in the literature, and by anchoring it in the research literature on the organizational dimension of entrepreneurship. As 'organizing perpetuated entrepreneurship' emerges as a *contradictio in terminis*, it is concluded that a subtle conception of the organizational dimension is needed to understand how organizing processes can play an important role in perpetuating the initiated creativity. Therefore, the next two fragments explore 'the organizational library'.

This exploration of the organizational domain is staged in two steps by focusing on the domain of organization studies as an academic discipline and by focusing on one of its most challenging perspectives, i.e. the so-called 'process school' which studies organization as 'organizing'. *Fragment 2* looks at the organizational literature through the metaphor of the library. The reader is guided through the library in four consecutive visits. It is concluded that Organization Studies has become a many-headed domain in turmoil with a literature that is difficult to encompass.

Fragment 3 discusses the flux metaphor as a promising text within this library. It is argued that a process theory of reality and organizing can help us in studying the impossible task of 'organizing perpetuated entrepreneurship'. A more concrete conception of such a process theory of organization is elaborated by suggesting the use of process language, the notion of dilemma and event.

In *fragment 4*, we return to the 'academic' field of entrepreneurship, and review the emergence of the entrepreneurship domain as a new academic discipline which itself pretends to be an entrepreneurial and innovative endeavor. It is argued that this discipline seems to be caught in the dilemma between becoming a classic academic discipline and creating an identity of its own. From the exploration of the organizational library, two suggestions are made to deal with this dilemma, and to set up this research project. A first orientation is to outline a process study of entrepreneurship. A second orientation is to open up the entrepreneurial library for a social constructionist approach to 'entrepreneuring'.

Fragment One

Paradise Lost? Introductory Problem Formulation

This thesis will focus on the organizing process of innovative young firms through the study of high tech firms, in an attempt to understand how these firms organize their need to remain innovative. This 'thin' question will be elaborated towards a more 'thick' problem formulation in three ways. In the first place, we shall describe the problem formulation and research question in broad terms. Secondly, the terrain of this study will be demarcated in light of the way phenomena of entrepreneurship are defined in the literature. Thirdly, the problem formulation will be anchored in the research literature on the organizational dimension of entrepreneurship.

Organizing Young Innovative Firms: Problem Formulation

This study takes organizational problems of innovative young firms as a point of departure. At the beginning of the eighties, a large number of small-sized high tech firms were created, and played a major role in the emergence of new sectors such as informatics, micro-electronics, telecommunication, and biotechnology. These innovative young firms are involved in a long-term process of searching, the destination of which is not easy to discern. The main reason for starting up such a business is the belief of one or two entrepreneurs that out of a promising technology or technological competence a profitable product or know-how can be developed. The main challenge is to make this transition from 'feasible idea' to 'self sustaining project' come true, while taking into account limited resources (finances, people, time...). Two problems are related to this transition. First, it requires continuous innovation and searching in a context of uncertainty and chaos. The 'life cycle' of their technological developments is very short and has to be constantly updated or changed. As one interviewee said: "*We don't know today what we'll be doing in two years, what the technology that we now still have to develop will be, or what we will be able to live from.*" Second, in continuing this newness, more and more people get involved. Started as an initiative of one or two individuals, the firm grows quite quickly, thereby collectivizing its search process. Collectivization requires coordination and organization, while these firms at the same time do not want to lose their innovative spirit. As an engineer, who started a high tech firm together with a more expe-

rienced entrepreneur, replied, "*Organization is impossible in a firm of our kind. That's out of the question. It would undermine our innovative capacity. This would simply imply the death of our business.*" This account suggests the need to develop alternative organizational forms which are able to support the continuation of the innovative activities instead of 'undermining' them. As this engineer seems to think of 'organization' in such terms as 'stable, structured, formal, planned', a more dynamic language and view on organizational problems is required as well. So, these young firms have both to continue their innovativeness and to evolve towards an organized collective. The question is how both organizational problems can be tackled at the same time. This complex organizational task, which we call 'the continuity of newness as a collective activity' is the central question of this research project.

Our general research question can be formulated as follows: How is the transition made from an entrepreneurial initiative to an organizational entrepreneurship?. The underlying question is then: Is the entrepreneurial process doomed to die and to be transformed, or can the entrepreneurial process be sustained/conserved by the 'organizational' process?. Or, to make a literary comparison: Is it 'paradise lost' or (can) 'paradise (be) regained'?. Thus, we need to examine how the organizational process can be aligned to this problem of 'continuity of newness as a collective activity'. In line with both interwoven organizing tasks, the general research question can be formulated as two connected research questions: (1) Through which organizing forms does continuous innovation become possible and sustainable? and (2) How does one organize the transition from an individual initiative to an activity of collective innovation?

Focusing the Research Field: Towards a Definition of Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship - a hard-to-define phenomenon

We shall demarcate the research field of this study to arrive at a definition of the phenomenon of entrepreneurship - one out of the broad variety now available - which we can subsequently use for this study. Bull and Thomas (1993) remark that writers seem somewhat obsessed with defining the word 'entrepreneur'. A glance through the literature reveals that defining and focusing entrepreneurship is a difficult task. In the first place, we see that the activity of 'defining' tackles a great deal more than just the 'entrepreneur' and 'entrepreneurship', as authors also focus their definition on such topics as the entrepreneurial firm (Carland, Hoy, Boulton & Carland, 1984), the entrepreneurial event (Gartner, 1985; Bird, 1989), entrepreneurial activities (Gartner, 1988; Bird, 1989), the entrepreneurial process (e.g. Gartner, 1986), the entrepreneurial phenomenon (Brockhaus, 1987), entrepreneurial behavior (e.g. Bird, 1989), and the entrepreneurial career (Dyer, 1992). Secondly, entrepreneurial scholars 'conceive of' the act of defining in very ways. Definitions are rhetorical devices in which four different ways of defining entrepreneurship can be identified. A first way follows a so-called 'classic' pattern, by construing the definition in terms of 'entrepreneurship is...'. A second way has been conceived by distinguishing it from other, but related, phenomena, and by formulating the definition in terms of 'what it is not'; we call this approach 'external' or 'negative' differentiation. A third way of defining consists of developing typologies, classifications, and taxonomies, which define entrepreneurship in terms of what it includes simultaneously; this can be called 'internal' or 'positive' differentiation. Finally, a fourth 'tactic' of defining gives a more qualitative description which attempts to probe the 'heart' of entrepreneurship and which is often presented in metaphorical terms: 'entrepreneurship is like ...'.[1] We shall now use these four defining devices in order to focus the problem more narrowly and select those definitions which can be used to clarify our problem formulation.

The 'classical' way of defining entrepreneurship provides an answer to the questions 'what is entrepreneurship?' and 'what is an entrepreneur?'. Underlying this approach is the attempt to find a standard, universally accepted definition of entrepreneurship. However, in research practice there is a lot of variation in the particular answers, as can be noticed from definition reviews by, among others, Bird (1989), Chell et al. (1991), Gartner (1990), and Ginsberg and Buchholtz (1989).[2] I see an operational or working definition as a more appropriate way for a researcher to indicate his or her area of study, better supporting the tenor of the problem formulation. Such a definition, which focuses on innovation and creativity and on the creation of newness, goes back to one of the founding fathers of the entrepreneurship domain, Schumpeter, who stressed the introduction of one or more 'new combinations': new goods and new services,[3] new methods of production, new markets and new sources of supply, and a new organization of the industry (Vesper, 1980; Bird, 1989). While the innovative quality of entrepreneurship is often stressed (Ginsberg & Buchholtz, 1989), this innovativeness is seldom linked to creativity. Bird (1989) is one of the exceptions, systematically reflecting on entrepreneurship as a creative process and seeing entrepreneurs among the more creative of organizational players. While she gives five definitions simultaneously, she takes one of them as an operational definition to focus upon: "*Entrepreneurial behavior is opportunistic, value-driven,*

[1] 'Metaphor' is here used as a general heading for the linguistic tropes whereby one image or concept is substituted for *or* compared to another.
[2] For instance, Gartner (1990) found eight themes in the way scholars talk about entrepreneurship : the entrepreneurs, innovation, organization creation, creating value, profit or non-profit, growth, uniqueness, and the owner-manager.
[3] Bird (1989) has rightly added services. This illustrates that the phenomenon of entrepreneurship is a process which has been transformed throughout history.

value-adding, risk-accepting, creative activity, where ideas take the form of organizational birth, growth, or transformation" (p. 5-6). The creative side of entrepreneurship reflects the value-adding, innovative, and organization-creating aspects, which allow a venturing into a generative process of new forms, new organization, new products, and new language. One of the main discussion points in this variation of definitions is whether entrepreneurship involves the creation of organization (Gartner, 1988; Low & MacMillan, 1988). Dyer (1992) for instance, calls the founding of new businesses the essence of entrepreneurial activity. However, many new business creations can hardly be characterized as innovative organizational activities. In her definition, Bird (1989) includes growth and transformation as well. A good option, it seems to me, would consider entrepreneurship as the generation of creative ideas and activities which lead to the creation and continuation of new organizations or the innovative transformation of existing organizations. This option also comes close to what Churchill (1992, p. 586) has recently identified as an increasing consensus attained around the concept of entrepreneurship, which can be named as "*the process of uncovering or developing an opportunity to create value through innovation and seizing that opportunity without regard to either resources (human and capital) or the location of the entrepreneur - in a new or existing company.*"

If it is difficult to say what entrepreneurship *is* maybe it is easier to say what it is *not*. A second device for defining it is to differentiate it negatively and to thus to distinguish it from other phenomena which are nonetheless related, such as small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (Carland, Hoy, Boulton & Carland, 1984), intrapreneurship (Luchsinger & Bagby, 1987; Gibb, 1990; Hisrich, 1990; Ross, 1987; Steyaert, Bouwen & Van Looy, forthcoming), start-ups and new venture creation (Gartner, 1985), innovation (Quinn, 1979; Stevenson, 1983; Khan & Manopichetwattana, 1989), high tech firms (Maidique, 1980; Roure & Keeley, 1990), and management in general (Czarniawska-Joerges & Wolff, 1991; Kaish & Gilad, 1991). In general, this defining device tries to separate entrepreneurs from non-entrepreneurs, which has led to a great deal of empirical research into defining distinguishing characteristics of the two groups (Chell et al., 1991). In distinguishing 'the entrepreneur' from 'the small business owner' and 'the entrepreneurial venture' from 'the small business venture', Carland, Hoy, Boulton and Carland (1984) stress innovation as the basic distinctive criterion, using Schumpeter's definition (1934). The entrepreneur is defined as "*an individual who establishes and manages a business for the principal purposes of profit and growth. The entrepreneur is characterized principally by innovative behavior and will employ strategic management practices in the business*" while the entrepreneurial venture is conceived as "*one that engages in at least one of Schumpeter's four categories of behavior, that is, the principal goals of an entrepreneurial venture are profitability and growth and the business is characterized by innovative strategic practices*" (Carland, Hoy, Boulton & Carland, 1984, p. 358).[4]

A third way of defining, through positive or internal differentiation, consists of identifying different kinds of entrepreneurship or different types of entrepreneurs. From this perspective, several typologies, classifications and taxonomies have been developed both conceptually and empirically with regard to entrepreneurs, entrepreneurial events, entrepreneurial entrances and entrepreneurial activities (Webster, 1977; Vesper, 1980; Dunkelberg & Cooper, 1982; Hébert & Link, 1988; Ginsberg & Buchholtz, 1989; Gartner, Mitchell & Vesper, 1989). In studying the small high tech firm, we are studying what Kets de Vries (1977) calls the 'R&D technical entrepreneur', next to the craftsman entrepreneur and the opportunistic entrepreneur,[5] and to what Vesper (1980) calls 'independent innovators', inventors building an organization to produce and sell an invention, including high technology. Instead of types or categories, we find it more appropriate to speak of contexts where the entrepreneurial process is studied. For the high tech organization, this study implies choosing for a rapidly changing technological context, stiff competition, and limited resources, requiring state-of-the-art expertise from widely differing sources (Bird, 1989).

Answering the question 'what is entrepreneurship?' appears to be a hard job and has led to a host of very different attempts: besides the 'classical' definitions and the negative and positive differentiations, one finds portraits, pictures, bold descriptions, metaphors... They all have in common the fact that they search to get to 'the heart' of entrepreneurship (Stevenson & Gumpert, 1985), 'the force' of entrepreneurship (Bays, 1988), or 'the spirit' of entrepreneurship (Abdnor, 1988), and try to capture its very distinctive features and its essence in a qualitative way. In these texts authors have not refrained from mystifying and concealing the entrepreneurial phenomenon, going against the intentions of defining, which are to clarify and to focus. For instance, Livesay (1982, p. 13) writes "*I would suggest that successful entrepreneurship is an art form as much as or perhaps more than it is an economic activity, and as such it is as difficult as any other artistic activity to explain in terms of origin, method or environmental influence.*" Defining and describing entrepreneurship seems to be a problem from the very start, and here it becomes clear how 'the entrepreneur' escapes the limits these acts of defining try to draw. Already in 1971, Kilby compared defining the entrepreneur to 'hunting a Heffalump', the fictional animal from the Winnie-the-Pooh stories: the entrepreneur, like the Heffalump, has been hunted by many entrepreneurial researchers "*using various ingenious trapping devices, but no one so far has succeeded in capturing him. All who claim to have caught sight of him report that he is enormous, but they disagree on his particularities*" (p. 1). From this fourth approach, it is believed

[4] In contrast, a small business owner is defined as "*an individual who establishes and manages a business for the principal purpose of furthering personal goals. The business must be a primary source of income and will consume the majority of one's time and resources. The owner perceives the business as an extension of his or her personality, intricately bound with family needs and desires*", while a small business venture "*is any business that is independently owned and operated, not dominant in its field, and does not engage in any new marketing or innovative practices.*"

[5] The latter two are based on the typology of Smith (1967).

'that entrepreneurship is the art of being different', and that the phenomenon will always escape us in some respects: "*Organizational emergence is, at its core, about variation. Each emerging organization is different from all previous organizations. These differences, no matter how subtle, need to be considered*" (Gartner, 1993, p. 236).

We shall try to 'capture' the core difference of entrepreneurship by stressing creativity as its essence. This is in keeping with the idea that entrepreneurs are 'organization makers', which can be interpreted almost literally: they are constructing a (new) organizational reality and creating a new community of meaning in delineating and shaping the internal versus the external environment. However, we shall not refer to the innovative activities and creations of an individual as such but to innovation which requires collective action, and which implies a transition of individual initiatives into collective endeavors. The option is therefore to study the entrepreneurial process in the context of high tech firms. The high tech firms we shall study can indeed be seen as 'new combinations', which provide new technologies (goods), serving as services as well since they are integrated into the production process of other businesses and not just sold as isolated bits of knowledge. Simultaneously, they assist in the development of new markets, partly through the re-organization of the field of business technologies, and they themselves look for new methods of production and supply. Ultimately, I do not think that a universal definition of entrepreneurship can be found, as the phenomenon is inherently localized and transformed throughout human history. The insights of this study need then in the first place to be localized in these referential habitats.

Art, play, and high tech firms: creativity as the core of collective innovative entrepreneurship

Art is the aesthetic arena in which human creativity is allowed to emerge and to develop through play and imagination. In artistic creativity, we think in the first place of creations and creative acts of outstanding individual artists in the fields of, for example, music, painting, sculpture, or literature. Creative actions, however, often transcend the level of individual genius, in whom intuitive and natural creativity is surrounded by mystery. It thus becomes collectivized, as is seen in theater, music, opera, and other performing arts. This implies a process with a different quality. This collectivity is a burden, but also provides an extra elan to the creative process: in other words, the potential for chaos is greater but so is the potential for newness and originality, as can be seen in the collective improvisation of a dance group or a jazz orchestra (Preston, 1987).

Creativity is very much at risk when it is translated into collective experience and action, since when the creative process has to cope with uncertainty, chaos, impulses, ambiguity and instability, it is embedded within relational patterns and group processes. A significant boundary is crossed when creativity is no longer a matter only of individual ingenuity or brilliant soloists but is involved in social interaction, something which can enhance or stifle the creative spirit. How does this come about?

During the creative process, something new or something which goes beyond what has already been, arises. In the beginning, everything seems possible, but sooner or later the limits which are shaped by the creative process itself become tangible: as the way is being paved, the further route becomes gradually confined. The main tension is then to find and give form without losing the potential for further creative forming. In collective creation, the group can enlarge the creative potential by merging multiple complementary and contradictory realities into a transgressive reality, but it can reinforce the awareness of the self-created limits as well. We can learn from experiences with collective performing groups, how they walk a thin line in dealing with the emotional and relational dimensions of group life with its potential for freezing or enriching the creative process and its output (Passeron, 1981). Sometimes the group swerves from this line and the creative potential shrinks visibly into a stiff state of infertility. *The question is then how the group process can contribute to the creative process, and how the transition from individual towards collective creativity can be understood.*

This comparison with collective creation in the setting of art is possibly too far-fetched for some organization scholars and it is certainly not 'business-as-usual'. We can also look into how people engage in daily creative living and how they perform creativity in their usual activities. For instance, a newborn baby is both a *tabula rasa* and an omnipotent person, a pool of creative possibilities. According to Winnicott, human beings make a creative entry into a life which is nurtured through *play* (Winnicott, 1971). However, he often sees a loss by individuals in the establishment of a personal capacity for creative living. Play, then, is the main arena where everyone, children as well as adults, can explore and maintain their creative capacity. In playing, a child discovers the self, while an adult can re-find a sense of self.

A crucial feature in play is the permanent possibility for a new *tabula rasa*, as when the child suddenly sweeps away the sand castle it has built: it is not the castle which counts, but its construction. In going through this repertoire of possibilities and their realization as temporary entities, the identity of the child emerges and becomes developed. *The question is how this creative entry into life can be continued and stimulated.*

High tech firms are collective arenas of lively and unbridled creativity. In the creative process of a high tech company, the idea and feeling of 'omnipotence' are always present, as illustrated by the initial but shared conviction in a Flemish company that "*the whole world belongs to our firm.*" This feeling is shared by other high tech firms where one can often hear sayings as

"*we will become the world leader in our domain*" or "*we have nothing to fear.*" In essence, each initiates play activity, which both constitutes their origin and is necessary for further development *tout court*. As an entrepreneur in one of our cases said: "*My engineers come here to play, and since play cannot be controlled, the lights are on 24 hours a day.*" However, the main question really is how they can conserve 'their creative entry into the business world.' Can they allow their clients to call the firm in the middle of the night, as the child normally is expected to wake its parents from sleep? In other words, how can they both maintain their play mode and also take external reality into account? How can they pursue their struggle to remain natural habitats for creative activity?

In some ways, this feeling of omnipotence is unrealistic, and the sense of 'paradise lost' sometimes comes as a shock. Thus, besides the dream of unlimited possibilities, a sense of reality has to be injected at some point. In its development, the high tech firm is at a midpoint between the world of potentialities and the world of realizations. The challenge is then not to lose its feeling for the potential, and to learn to cope with this 'trouble in paradise'. An important question is to understand how this balancing act takes place.

High tech creations can thus be seen as extreme examples of the more general situation of starting-up a new venture 'out-of-nothing'. First, their creative attempts have a long-term orientation and ask for continued newness due to the complexity and high rate of change of their technology. While *continuing* creative search and innovation can be seen as an inner contradiction in itself, it captures very well the vision and mission of making the impossible happen. Second, these innovative activities are not a matter of individual brilliance. Although the initial role of some highly gifted engineers and so-called product champions cannot be underestimated, their creative activity is a collective one: not only groups of engineers, but, as the firm grows, other persons and departments come into the picture. And, analogous to collective creation in art, the task of continuing newness becomes embedded in social interaction and relational patterns.

In short, the aim of this doctoral thesis is to focus both empirically and conceptually on the development of the small innovative (high tech) firm and to develop our understanding - through the use of in-depth case-stories - of how the firm is able to maintain its innovativeness and creative potential.

Anchoring the Problem Formulation: a Meeting Between the Entrepreneurial Domain and Organization Theory

The problem formulation of this study concerns the organizing process of perpetuated entrepreneurship which was conceived as a collective creative endeavor. This problem formulation will be anchored in the research literature, which studies the organizational perspective of entrepreneurship. Such a literature review can be seen as an attempt to set up a meeting between the entrepreneurial domain and organization theory and as a partial fusion between the library of entrepreneurship and organization theory (also fragments 2 and 4). In studying the organizational dimension of entrepreneurship, the 'relationship' between organization theory and entrepreneurship can be typified *à la fois* as neglected and distorted, privileged and necessary, as well as blurred. Framing this relationship through these characteristics leads simultaneously to the interest in undertaking such a study as this one, which looks at the organizing process of perpetuated entrepreneurship in a high tech context.

Firstly, we can qualify the relationship between 'the organizational perspective' and 'the entrepreneurial phenomenon' as a *neglected* relationship (Bouwen & Steyaert, 1990a). In the literature on entrepreneurship, the awareness of the organizational perspective has long remained rather limited. Important reviews of entrepreneurship in the eighties (Sexton & Smilor, 1986b; Vickery, 1986) did not mention the organizational dimension as a research topic or as an issue for future research. The important topics they addressed included: financing and venture capital, the psychology of the individual, female entrepreneurship, family succession, startups, and managerial problems. Also, more recently, Churchill (1992) in drawing the future research needs, refers to research methodologies, corporate venturing, venture and risk capital, high tech entrepreneurship, and the process of entrepreneurship. The organizational dimension is not considered as a research theme, although the last theme, the process of entrepreneurship, comes closest to this topic. However, Churchill is only referring to studies on micro (entrepreneurial strategies of founders and CEO's) and macro (population ecology) levels, while a meso-level, which would focus on the social-organizational processes, is not mentioned.

Vice-versa, in the field of organizational behavior (OB) and organization theory it has long been possible to observe an almost total 'black-out' with regard to 'small and young firms'. Most research into the organizational behavior field has been oriented towards large firms. In consequence, Quinn and Cameron (1983) suggest that "*it may be that organizations must go through the first three stages in the developmental model before many of our conventional theories are appropriate. This would seem to be a particularly reasonable observation when we recognize that most*

research has focused on mature organizations and most research has been cross-sectional in design." More recently, Czarniawska-Joerges (1992) argued the need to study large organizations, claiming that large organizations will be with us for a long time yet, treating 'large' and 'complex' synonymously, denying as such the complexity and variation of organizing in smaller contexts, and stating finally that relatively we already know much about small firms, thus paving the way to a concentration on large enterprises. This favored orientation towards 'large firms' is also present in the work of organizational scholars who have nevertheless been involved in studying small, young and/or innovative firms, which has actually '*distorted*' the entrepreneurship/organization relationship more than fostered it. In our opinion, this distortion can be related to their attitude towards the small innovative firm, which departs from their habitual activity and experience with large firms, rather than from an explicit interest in entrepreneurial firms as such. As a consequence they treat entrepreneurial (small) firms rather stepmotherly, as the following three examples (of specific research contexts) should illustrate. In a first example, we can see that organizational theorists think of small firms as one homogeneous whole, while entrepreneurial scholars have systematically stressed their heterogeneity. They think then of small firms as one group of firms in the total population with the aim of building a general model of organizations. The debate on the relative advantages of the small versus the large type of firm with regard to economic efficiency and impact (Brytting, 1991; Acs & Audretsch, 1992), innovation potential (Rothwell & Zegveld, 1982; Acs & Audretsch, 1990), job creation (Bird, 1989), or potential for human development (Mintzberg, 1988; Bird, 1989), seems to consider SMEs and entrepreneurship as one single group. A more specific organizational illustration can be seen in the work of Mintzberg (1979, 1988), who, in formulating five configurations for a theory of organizational structure, distinguishes between the entrepreneurial configuration ('simple structure') and the innovative configuration ('adhocracy')[6] to describe the structural features of small, young, and innovative firms. We should not doubt the usefulness of this structure-model when looking at the total population of firms, since one can discover then the typical structural identity of the small and young firm in relation to other types. However, the labels 'simple structure' and 'adhocracy' cannot be seen as sufficient to describe the dynamics of the organizing processes for such a heterogeneity of small entrepreneurial firms (and their structures). A second example can be found in the context of developmental models of starting firms evolving into 'grown-up' firms.

[6] He also distinguishes the machine, professional and divizionalized configuration. In light of our definition of entrepreneurship, I consider the labels 'entrepreneurial' and 'innovative' to be inappropriate. The labels of 1979, 'simple structure' and 'adhocracy' are, however, just as inadequate, since the word 'simple' hides the complex organizing processes of relatively small groups of people who work together in the same organizational context, while the word 'adhocracy' stresses one-sidedly the ad hoc character of this type of firm, neglecting the historical-cultural dimension as well as the influence of retrieved experiences and built up rules which are at stake in every human interaction, even improvization.

The underlying assumption seems often to be that new small firms are destined to grow into large organizations: many of these models are characterized by a normative evolution towards a maturity phase (Greiner, 1978; Churchill & Lewis, 1986), implying those that do not reach the 'final' stage remain 'premature'; or an evolution towards the stage of 'public ownership and professional management' (Dyer, 1986), as if the others are to be considered unprofessional. A third example concerns the self-interested preoccupation of organizational scholars with entrepreneurial firms and their typical characteristics, with the aim of learning for their own management practice of large firms. The phenomenon of intrapreneurship can serve as an illustration: large firms try to develop entrepreneurial qualities and activities in their corporate context, and in that way, try to learn from their entrepreneurial colleagues. Striking is the fact that Pinchot (1985) turns the relationship the other way around, defining the entrepreneur from the point of view of the intrapreneur ("*the entrepreneur is someone who fills the role of an intrapreneur outside the organization*") and dedicating a complete chapter to answer the question of why intrapreneurs can be better than entrepreneurs.

In surveying these three contexts which take small entrepreneurial firms as one single group, where becoming big and large is the measure of maturity and professionalism, and where interest is actually self-interest, it seems as if the understanding and the theorizing about entrepreneurial firms is sometimes more hindered than improved when one approaches them from a 'large firm perspective'.

There is, however, a growing awareness of entrepreneurial scholars' interest in studying the organizational dimension of entrepreneurship and similarly of organizational scholars' interest in studying entrepreneurship, and it is even argued that considering this relationship can be a *privileged* and necessary undertaking. From the viewpoint of entrepreneurship, this means that the study of the organizing process is seen as a necessary theme for understanding more fully the entrepreneurial phenomenon. No reference is then made to any possible outcomes for organization theory (re: large firms), since understanding the organizational dimension of small entrepreneurial firms is a goal in itself. The assumption is here that entrepreneurial firms need the researcher's full attention. Dandridge (1979) was one of the first to claim, using a sharp image, that small business needs its own organizational theory since "*children are not 'little grown ups'.*" d'Amboise and Muldowney (1988) formulate a similar but more moderate argument: "*It is clear that prescriptions for the management of small business are rooted in the corpus of general management theory; however, it is increasingly apparent that general management is not sufficiently specific when applied to small business. Small business management includes an adequate number of distinguishing characteristics so that a subbody of constructs particular to it is necessary.*" Another assumption is that one hardly talks of 'the' (small) entrepreneurial firm, as Gartner (1985)

points out: "*If a much different perspective is taken (all entrepreneurs and their firms are alike) the perspective that there are many different kinds of entrepreneurs and many ways to be one and that the firms they create vary enormously as do the environments they create them in, then the burden shifts.*" The challenge becomes then to invest in differentiated research and theory.

From the point of view of organizational theorists, this means that the study of the small (innovative) firm is particularly fruitful for developing and understanding organizational processes. We can refer here to Weick's (1974) amendments to organizational theorizing, where he encourages us to study "*everyday events, micro-organizations, and absurd organizations*" instead of big business organizations. I firmly believe that organization theory can be enriched in several ways by studying entrepreneurship. Since organization theorists are looking for new organizational forms and theories, I see the entrepreneurial organization as an important candidate. Concepts like networking (Birley, 1985) and regional development (Sweeney, 1987), as developed in the domain of entrepreneurship and SMEs, can be of interest for theories of large firms, actually confronted with issues such as downsizing, flexible structuring, horizontalization, and outsourcing. In addition, innovation and organizational change has become one of the main themes in organizational theory (Hosking & Anderson, 1992) and one of the main challenges of businesses. Understanding the organization of entrepreneurship can here also be fruitful to develop a theory of organizational change, considering the emergence of an innovative small firm as one of the most natural forms of 'organizational development'. Furthermore, the entrepreneurial small firm in general has been normatively seen as an important organizational form. Mintzberg (1988), for instance, makes a strong plea for the small firm, after having demonstrated the consequences of the large, bureaucratic firm for its people, for the organization itself and for society in general. He concludes: "*We should be encouraging young organizations to establish themselves and attain adulthood, we should be encouraging small organizations that provide eclecticism in the marketplace, we should be encouraging focused and autonomous organizations that understand their missions, 'know' the people they serve and excite the ones they employ*" (p. 375). Now that the organization domain is making a major shift from a bureaucratic towards a post-bureaucratic period (see fragment 2), we see the study of entrepreneurship as privileged in helping to understand as well as to realize this transition.

In the nineties, the mutual interest of entrepreneurial scholars and organizational students has increased and the boundary between both disciplines become more permeable. In my view, the relationship between entrepreneurship and organization theory is becoming more *blurred*. The need for entrepreneurial scholars to explore the organizational dimension of entrepreneurship and to use organizational theories in this, has become self-evident as new research themes have emerged. One research theme in the entrepreneurial field concerns the social (external) context of entrepreneurship, as can be noticed in the increasing number of studies on networks (Birley, 1985; Donckels, 1993; Johannisson, 1987; Friedman & Monsted, 1989; Monsted, 1994), partnerships (Bird, 1989; De Schoolmeester & Moenaert, 1991), and the role of external support and resources (Bouwen, Donckels, Letouche, Van Assche, 1994; Jarillo, 1989; Lipparini & Sobrero, 1994). A second research theme concerns the rise of so-called collective entrepreneurship (Reich, 1987), team entrepreneurship (Stewart, 1989), team building (Jacobs & Everett, 1988), and high performance teams (Slevin & Covin, 1992), which have been suggested as primary models which firms will use to perform in the nineties, especially in contexts with complex technologies and innovative demands. This interest for the social context of entrepreneurship and the idea that entrepreneurship is a social phenomenon requires insights from social and organizational theory. Vice versa, the need for organizational theorists to study entrepreneurial settings has become obvious as the distinction between 'large' and 'small' and the whole idea of 'scale' is actually rethought. The situation of the nineties indicates that 'large' firms are being reshaped into networks with qualities of both large and small firms (Peters, 1992a, 1992b; Snow, Miles & Coleman, 1992), with the formation of networks across organizations (Kreiner & Schultz, 1993; Finsrud, 1994) and relatedness (Sorrentino & Williams, 1995), while as I have pointed out, small firms are being studied in terms of their embeddedness in larger networks (Johannisson, 1987). This implies that the boundaries of organizations have become fuzzier and, specifically, that the general distinction between the entrepreneurial and intrapreneurial context, habitually made in the innovation literature of the eighties, no longer holds. Furthermore, there is a tendency to develop small, relatively autonomous, creative entities within these organizational networks which requires the understanding of their social organizational dynamics. Studies of small innovative contexts, as initiated in the entrepreneurial studies of the eighties can become useful for this new organizational context. In this ambiguous boundary between entrepreneurship and organization theory, there is a need for the development of an organizing theory of small creative 'entities', to which this study will try to contribute.

Conclusion: a Meeting of Strangers?

In the description of our problem formulation, organizing entrepreneurship emerged as a complex task with almost contradictory demands. The literature review suggested that the entrepreneurial and organizational research tradition can be seen as a meeting which is simultaneously neglected, necessary, and blurred. Perpetuating entrepreneurship as a collective

creative endeavor becomes then very much a 'mission impossible' and presents the organizational dimension of entrepreneurship as an *impossible* relationship. This reflection raises questions such as: is it even possible to 'organize' the 'entrepreneurial process'? Are organizing and entrepreneuring not two different and contradictory logics, which are allergic to each other, difficult to link, and resembling more a meeting among strangers than between relatives?

The main challenge of this study - to describe and to understand how the organizing process can foster entrepreneurial qualities and how the organizing process can perpetuate the innovativeness of an 'entrepreneurially-born' firm - is then to see how such a meeting among strangers can be set up. Some bring a rather pessimistic and even tragic vision to this task. Their view says that entrepreneurship is doomed to die, and that it is not granted to innovativeness to live long: entrepreneurs will sooner or later dig their own grave. This view is reflected in practice, as it is observed that entrepreneurs need to leave the firm they created themselves or need to learn other competencies than entrepreneurial ones; and it is also reflected in theory, since some definitions limit entrepreneurship to the starting up of new firms (Bird, 1989), and since most stage models conceive the entrepreneurial stage only as the first stage (see for instance, Quinn & Cameron, 1983), which needs then to be transgressed to lead into another configuration where the firm becomes stabilized and more controlled, the entrepreneurial spirit lost. The belief is that "*entrepreneurship ends when the creation stage of the organization ends*" (Gartner, 1988, p. 26). This study takes a more optimistic view as it assumes that organizing processes can play an important role in continuing and perpetuating the initiated creativity. Amit, Glosten and Muller (1993) have recently called this one of the major challenges to theory development in entrepreneurship research: "*A wide range of unanswered questions about the organizational setting that would foster entrepreneurial activity remain*" (p. 830). Such a vision requires a subtle conception of the organizational dimension, which we shall try to elaborate throughout the next two fragments. In the first fragment we shall open wide the organizational library to see what books can help us in this 'impossible' task (see fragment 2). In the subsequent fragment it will be argued that a process theory of reality and organizing can meet such requirements, and a concrete conception of such a process theory of organization will be elaborated (see fragment 3).

Fragment Two

The Organization Library, or, the Pleasure of the Organization Text

Libraries and Labyrinths

Paris is one building richer. One that is in a category of its own, the crown on François Mitterand's reign which stimulated a significant series of new or innovative architectural creations: *L'Opéra de la Bastille, Le Forum des Halles, L'Arche de la Défense, la Cité de la Musique,* and especially the *Louvre*, an architectural multi-year project without precedent, which both above and below ground has radically redrawn an area extending to the *Arc de Triomphe*, with Pei's provocative pyramid in the middle, through which one can plunge into the catacombs of the museum. This time the new building is...a library. Which library do I mean? *La Bibliothèque National de France, 'la très grande bibliothèque'* or *'TGB'* as it is mocked by its detractors. Completely in glass, this temple of books. A world of texts brought together in one place. Glory be to the book. A bitterly contested project, constructed around four corner towers, rising out of the ground like so many Towers of Babel, yearning for Godly knowledge. Encased in glass, which has raised fears that the streaming sunlight won't make the preservation of the books any easier, it is seen as a provocation to common sense, as an extraordinary challenge to technology. For this reason transparent, as if all the knowledge of the world, scientific and popular, books and magazines, all in one building, were accessible to all. All the reading in the world, gathered in one place, in a Tantalus-like attempt to control the world by centralizing its scriptures. Denying that there is never a last book. Almost as extreme as that other extreme, censure, which tries to rule the world by destroying books - even the very first book - all over the world. The world has become a library.

And that is no coincidence. We shall be invoking the world of organizations and our knowledge of it by means of the metaphor of the organization library. The first big popular postmodern - or then again not[1] - novel, written by Umberto Eco, turns on the unlocking of a library. I would like to invoke the image of organization theory as a library by referring Eco's *The Name of the Rose,* in which he compares the world with a library: "*The library is a great labyrinth, sign of the labyrinth of the world. You go in and you don't know if you'll come out again.*" In this Medieval thriller with its philosophical streak in which various religious orders come together to debate over the truth, an impressive but mysterious library plays the leading

[1] See Braeckman (1993), Vanheeswijck (1993), and also Eco's own post-script to *The Name of the Rose.*

role. In a dialogue between William of Baskerville and his young traveling companion Adso of Melk, it becomes clear that knowledge never exists in and of itself, but that a particular book only has meaning because it refers to another, which in turn refers to a third, and so on. Knowledge is intertextual:

> *"It seemed to me, as I read this page, that I had read some of these words before, and some phrases that are almost the same, which I have seen elsewhere, return to my mind. It seems to me, indeed, that this page speaks of something there has been talk about during these past days... But I cannot recall what. I must think it over. Perhaps, I'll have to read other books."*
>
> *"Why? To know what one book says you must read others?"*
>
> *"At times this can be so. Often books speak of other books. Often a harmless book is like a seed that will blossom into a dangerous book, or it is the other way around: it is the sweet fruit of a bitter stem. In reading Albert, couldn't I learn what Thomas might have said? Or in reading Thomas, know what Averroës said?"*
>
> *"True," I said amazed. Until then I had thought each book spoke of the things, human or divine, that lie outside books. Now I realized that not infrequently books speak of books: it is as if they spoke among themselves. In the light of this reflection, the library seemed all the more disturbing to me. It was then the place of a long, centuries-old murmuring, an imperceptible dialogue between one parchment and another, a living thing, a receptacle of powers not to be ruled by a human mind, a treasure of secrets emanated by many minds, surviving the death of those who had produced them or had been their conveyors."*

The library is a mysterious labyrinth from which one cannot escape, unless one destroys the labyrinth, destroys the world. At the end of the novel, fire consumes the library in a kind of Last Judgment, a holocaust, which means death for the chief librarian, Jorge of Burgos, this godly guardian of knowledge, a blind seer. Fire and knowledge embodied in one image.

However, Eco is not the only one who conceives of the world using the metaphor of a library that has everything but where nothing is known until a book is read and actualized - without, however, leading to definitive truth, for every book invokes another book and acquires meaning by reference, and in relation to other books. Just as there is no last book, there is also no last (or first) meaning. A similar image is to be found in the work of Jorge Luis Borges, himself director for a time of the Buenos Aires library, and himself, coincidentally or not, blind, like his namesake the chief librarian in Eco's book. Among his writings, which include *Labyrinths*, we may read the following: "*Emerson*[2] *said that a library is a magic chamber in which there are many enchanted spirits. They wake when we call them. When the book lies unopened, it is literally, geometrically, a volume, a thing among other things. When we open it, when the book surrenders itself to its reader, the aesthetic event occurs. And even for the same reader the same book changes, for we change; we are the river of Heraclitus, who said that the man of yesterday is not the man of today, who will not be the man of tomorrow. We change incessantly, and each reading of a book, each rereading, each memory of that rereading, reinvents the text. The text too is the changing river of Heraclitus.*"[3] This intertextual anchoring makes books both concrete and local on the one hand, and part of a larger network of knowledge on the other: "*They (books) are upthrusts of an underlying geography that is at once local and, for all that, a part of a universal pattern. And so, while they inevitably reflect a time and a place, they are part of a more general intellectual geography*" (Bruner, 1990, p. ix). The books that I have consulted for the writing of this dissertation have at specific moments received indelible but time-bound meanings; and yet each book has put me on the trail leading to the broader spectrum to which it belongs - call it the intellectual tradition, the theoretical approach, or the epistemological framework. This is a literary network, a natural cultural context within which research takes place.

[2] Ralph Waldo Emerson.

[3] Jorge Luis Borges, *Seven Nights*, trans. Eliot Weinberger (New York: New Directions, 1984), p. 76.

A Guided Tour

This visit to the organization library is theme-oriented. A faithful library user will be the guide who can answer your questions during the tour.

Visit one: science as literature

Q(uestion): Why compare organization studies to a library?

A(nswer): The world has become a library. This is what Eco is telling us, this is what Borges has pointed out. I can't see that it's any different for the world we live in, the world of organizations. It's as true for a scientific as for a practical view of organizations. This leads us to the relation between organization studies and literature; a relation that can be extended in a number of different directions:

- -organization science is literature, and scientific mastery of it becomes organizational authorship; the organization researcher is also an author, a writer of reports, scientific articles, courses, books - a producer of text;
- -organization practice is literature; the practice of organizations is a bookcase, a big little library from which the entrepreneur and the manager in general can borrow

according to personal preference; the manager is a reading manager;

-literature for the organization specialist: for the theorizing researcher and the practical manager, fiction is a treasury of insights, a source of inspiration...

-finally, literature by the entrepreneur, who becomes a writer of organization texts.

Q: Is the scholar then a writer, an organization author?

A: The organization scholar is also a writer. He or she writes reports, courses for students, chapters in handbooks, articles in periodicals, lectures... The act of writing takes up a considerable part of the day-to-day scholarly work. If the researcher is said to produce something, then it is in the first place a text. From research proposal to a final report. The only traces that a researcher leaves behind are texts. What's more, a researcher's merits are judged on the basis of national and international publications. A scholarly career, that next promotion depends on one's writing abilities. That's why many the researcher seems to be inspired by an unseen drive to publish. The researcher must write, whether he wants to or not, whether she is capable of it or not. And he or she must keep a running tally; every text delivers points, depending on where it is published, in an unassuming local journal, or better, in a renowned international periodical, preferably American. If there is a co-author, then it is important to get top billing because that means points. A scholar writes calculatingly.

Q: Are we then here speaking of literature? Must an organization author also pay attention to text and language? Do you accord an aesthetic dimension to a scientific text?

A: Many scientific texts employ their own jargon, and an over-structured form. They are written with great difficulty, just short of archaic. The language is distant and stilted, the style is over-polite and highly impersonal, the mood is colorless and nondescript. Hard to think that this style is intentional. The layout is standard as well, and the cover usually trivial, if not downright ugly. It would seem that a scientific work is not allowed to be attractive, nor offer any kind of reading pleasure. In fact, the form of the text is held very seriously in check, and as the possibility of publication draws nearer the text is scrutinized for transgressions of form or content. No experimenting. Most journal publications also follow fixed patterns: abstract, short introduction - formulation of the problem - situation within the literature - methodology - results - discussion of the results - conclusion. Are there, next to criteria of form and content, also aesthetic criteria? Can a scientific text also be prosaic or poetic? The answer to this question involves our implicit conceptions about the function of a book or a text. Traditionally, a scientific text is only a reflection of empirically validated theories, whereby the accuracy, the adequacy, and the clarity of the report are the only things that count. Text is here a means of communication, a representation of information and ideas. A less common conception is that the construction of an idea, of knowledge, is accomplished through the writing of a text. The act of writing is central. Furthermore, the writing is embedded in one or more other discourses which are not necessarily compatible with those of the reader. On the contrary. It would appear that in the first version, where priority is given to the objectivity of the text, life itself suddenly disappears. The text becomes dull, sterile, and monotonous - deadly boring in fact. This attack on scholarship and what it produces is not new. *Charles Baudelaire* long since addressed himself to 'businessmen', accusing them of having absolutely no feeling for wonder, no sense of the reality of life: "*For most of us, especially for businessmen in whose eyes nature does not exist unless it be in its strict relationship with their business interests, the fantastic reality of life becomes strangely blunted.*" According to Phillips (1992) we convert living organizational forms into formalized skeletons that lack a vital, living essence: "*In the process of examining the phenomenon of organization, the reality of organization as a form of life is driven out; our methods and approach reduce a complex web of interaction to a frail husk, outwardly beautiful but cold and empty. The study of organizations becomes strangely disconnected from the very phenomena it attempts to study, losing its relevance to real individuals in real situations. Organization studies becomes a curious museum, a warehouse of organizational specimens which provide only tentative glimpses of the complexity and wonder of real, living organizations. Wrapped up in our scientific wonder, it is only the occasional whiff of formaldehyde that reminds us that the essential aspect of these glittering specimens - their life-force - has been lost.*" Texts that report on such organization studies reflect this in their colorless and monotonous forms. Why this literary disinterestedness? Barthes (1986) gives us a clue: "*I am interested in language because it wounds or seduces me. Can that be a class eroticism? What class? The bourgeoisie? The bourgeoisie has no relish for language, which it no longer regards even as a luxury, an element of the art of living (death of 'great literature'), but merely as an instrument of decor (phraseology). The People? Here all magical or poetical activity disappears: the party's over, no more games with words: an end to metaphors, reign of the stereotypes imposed by petit bourgeois culture.*"[4] Have we not already said that language is merely a means available to the organization researcher, indifferent to the magic of wordplay, impervious to the lustrous power of one of his most valuable work instruments. Can the organization researcher, whom I here represent as in the first place an organization author, and who relies so heavily on language, on his or her own language, not be won over to another way of writing, to eloquence, to the art of writing? To the pleasure of the organization text?

Q: Can the same be applied to organization practice?

A: We may speak of a business library, since the organization field has become a world of

[4] Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), p. 38.

books. New titles appear in their droves, libraries are created. Every manager carries a book under his arm nowadays. It all began at the beginning of the eighties with bestsellers à la Peters and Waterman, which was a million-seller. And the list has grown long in the meantime. It has become relatively easy to get published, even in our Dutch-language sphere. Just walk into a bookstore, and you'll be astounded at what gets put into book-form these days: pulp literature, quick-fix booklets, how-to-do-it manuals, surveys, handbooks, biographies of managers, and one solitary business novel. On top of all that, translations appear thick and fast. Ouchi's *Theory Z*, another bestseller of the circa-1981 period, had already appeared in French in 1982 and in Dutch in 1983. These successful authors have kept on writing, as if trying to keep themselves in the picture. Waterman continued with *Adhocracy*, Peters with *Thriving on Chaos* and *Liberation Management*, and Pascal with *Managing on the Edge*. These books no longer circulate among academics alone and they are now by no means the only ones who produce them. Managers are beginning to read, or at the very least they are buying books. The manager is also beginning to write, and is becoming a successful author. Internationally, there is *Iacocca*, here in Belgium it is *Leysen* or *Huyghebaert*. Managers can get the 'classics' for personal use in handy pocket-book version, either as personal inspiration or to get a couple of philosophically tinted witticisms into their repertoire. Nowadays you've got your time-management diary in your inner-left pocket and a reference work with quotes from Seneca and Plato in your inner-right. The reading manager, who now has a librarian as well as a secretary, and who is copiously informed via notes, faxes, newspapers, reports, telephones, and so on, now also has a pile of organization literature to work through.

Q: Would you compare the entrepreneur with the writer then? Isn't that a very different picture from what we usually get: action-directed, dynamic, sleeves rolled up...?

A: That's why we are calling entrepreneurs writers in the first place. Writing is itself an action and goes beyond the idea that entrepreneurs try to be widely read from the vantage point of their armchairs. You have to see writing in broad terms. These anecdotes from two entrepreneurs, both in charge of an informatics firm, will make it clear how they, each in their own way, first seek out 'nothing' and then try to write down something essential:

"*Look, the weekend is sacred as far as I'm concerned. I don't want to be stuck here at the company. Sometimes we get together here on a Saturday morning to meet with the main players, but that's it. It's not that I can block out the company completely on the weekend, no way. I actually think about it more intensely, from a different perspective. On Saturday afternoon I'm usually alone. My wife has her own business and is usually working then. I get in my car and just drive around. A good long drive. Usually to the seaside, where I can get some fresh air, leaning against my car and thinking about the company, going over the past week and thinking ahead...*"

"*My door is always open, always. Anyone can come in and bother me, any time of the day. But now and then I close the door, tell my secretary to hold my calls, and tidy up the office. When I'm done, I take a sheet of blank white paper and lay it on my desk, in front of me, not a word on it. And then I write down what I really find important for my business. I do this regularly. It doesn't have to take long, an hour maybe. But it is as if I can reinvent the company. Tabula rasa - that makes everything possible again.*"

If I say that 'writing by entrepreneurs' can be broadly understood, then I mean above all that writing should not only be understood literally, but also figuratively, and in particular, that the production of their enterprise may be seen as a form of textual work and as an act of writing. Entrepreneurs create their enterprise as they write, connecting various texts with one another to form possible scenarios by establishing conversations around them. But such an understanding of the construction of entrepreneurship needs to be explained by pointing to the series of books which refer to the 'linguistic turn' in the organization and social sciences. This means that there is a long reading-trajectory ahead of us yet, from a social constructionism that lays the emphasis on the linguistic nature of social construction (in chapter two), via a link between scientific knowledge and writing (in chapter three), leading to a view of entrepreneurship as the weaving together of different discourses (in chapter five). Many of these books come from other libraries, and to understand how, despite this fact, they can be borrowed and read here, we have to look at how the field of organization studies has evolved. That is grounds for a second visit.

Visit two: the name of the library

A: Welcome. This library is called the library of organization studies. A name like 'Organization Studies' is an overarching title which keeps us from having to change the nameplate on the wall even before its predecessor has been taken down: Organizational Theory, Organizational Behavior, Organizational Psychology, Organizational Science, Organizational Development, Organizational Philosophy, Organizational Analysis... Organization studies is thus an ever-expanding domain with blurred inner and outer borders, and with an interdisciplinary 'substructure' that is getting more extensive. When Cummings (1978, p. 90) went in search of the frontiers of Organizational Behavior, he began by speaking words of encouragement to himself: "*Attempting to describe a field as dynamic and as multifaceted,*

or even as confusing, as Organizational Behavior (OB) is not a task for the timid. It may be a task that only the foolish, yet concerned, would even tackle." Cummings tried to establish some limits, distinguishing OB in three different ways - from organizational psychology, organizational theory, and personnel and human resources - but he was clearly aware that such distinctions must not be allowed to have the effect of reification: "*What is said here represents an unfinished product - a thought in process - not a finished, static, intellectual frozen definition. In fact, the argument is made that stimulating, dynamic fields are defined in process and that the processes of emergence and evolution should never end*" (p. 91). Seen from our vantage point, the actual placing of Cummings' borders has not remained all that relevant, having been overtaken by time; what *has* remained is his vague awareness that the development of a field is dependent on the quality of the border traffic between different scientific areas and disciplines. Cummings could not then have known that there was a time drawing near when the very border would be called into question and the whole world of borders, walls, horizons, backgrounds, gates and doors, frames, and lines would be enthusiastically explored[5] - although, in the same year, Mitroff and Pondy (1978, p. 145) came much closer to the current situation when they saw "*the embryo of a revolution in organizational behavior, and perhaps in the whole of the social sciences.*"

Q: What revolution are they alluding to here?

A: Actually, this is the same discussion that Cummings himself initiated; that is, which inner and outer walls need to be put up, which ones need to be torn down, and above all, how far do we need to go in all this? The discussion in the eighties was both intensive and extensive (Donaldson, 1985; Reed, 1985). The downside was the initiation of "*the dissolution of organizational analysis as an identifiable field of study and body of knowledge*" (Reed, 1992, p. 4). The upside was the opening of "*attractive possibilities for research and explanation that forged connections between philosophical debate, theoretical development and institutional change*" (Reed, 1992, p. 4). Organization theory lost its 'intellectual innocence': "*it was engaging in debates about the nature of social scientific research and explanation that moved beyond the narrow confines of established disciplinary discourse*" (Reed, 1992, p. 4). To sum up the whole story, I can cite Reed (1992), who sees three major developments that have occurred in organization theory since the end of the sixties. Through these three developments, our research can be situated adequately in the contextual changes of organization studies. On the level of theoretical developments, he sees a transition from orthodox consensus to pluralistic diversity. Burrell and Morgan's paradigmatical organization of organization theory (1979) is one of the best-known articulations of this theoretical diversity. In our next visit, we will pay some attention to it, and especially, to one of the most pressing questions of the nineties, how organization theory can develop through intellectual exchange among these paradigms. This study will try to understand entrepreneurship on the basis of a social constructionist paradigm, which is closely related to the interpretive paradigm in Burrell and Morgan's scheme. It is our concern to stimulate in that way a multiperspectivistic approach to entrepreneurship which has mainly been studied using a functionalist paradigm.

Second, on the level of changed organizational forms, Reed (1992) describes a transition from bureaucracy to networks. At the end of the second millennium, the bureaucracy-model, the main structural form of organization of this century, is being deconstructed. Behind the bureaucratic models reigns the principle of stability and order with the hierarchical structure as its main operational exponent. Reed remarks that, by the late 1960s, the focus on order had dominated the field to the virtual exclusion of alternative formulations. Now, organizations are learning that the main aim is to deal with instability and permanent change. Beyond bureaucracy is the message, as Bennis (1993) puts it. The principle behind the change model is that of flux and chaos.[6] In operational terms, the deconstruction of the bureaucracy model implies a reconceptualization of 'hierarchy', and the emergence of diverse trans-hierarchical concepts: adhocracy (Mintzberg, 1991; Waterman, 1990); loosely coupled systems (Orton & Weick, 1990), dissipative structures (Gemmill & Smith, 1985; Smith & Gemmill, 1991), and networks (Snow, Miles & Coleman, 1992; Miles & Snow, 1986), the latter of which can be seen as an overarching term for these structural changes. This study of high techs which try to develop 'flexible structures' of their own, fits very well these structural transitions, and can add to our understanding of the organizing processes involved in these network-type business firms.

Third, the level of emerging problematics gives the field some kind of coherent identity and shape as a going intellectual concern. There, Reed (1992) mentions a transition from 'organization' to 'disorganization'[7] which reflects the unmasking of the organization as a distinctive and separate entity. He sees a shift in problematics from order in the sixties, to domination and power in the seventies, to linguistic and cultural representations in the eighties. Especially, this last shift is important as it captures best the revolution we have been talking about. It parallels not only the rise of a social constructionist approach in organization studies but it announces the so-called 'linguistic turn', which "*owes much to the widening impact of postmodernist thinking within the field*" (Reed, 1992, p. 11). The limitations of organization studies is here most strenuously put to the test. In order to show more clearly the interweaving of postmodern thinking and linguistic views, and to indicate how this so completely crosses up thought about organization studies, we would have to visit a whole different department of the

[5] See *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air* (Steyaert, 1994c) or further the cahiers *Vertoog* and *Literatuur* from Antwerp 93, Leuven: Kritak.

[6] This flux principle (Morgan, 1986) will be elaborated in fragment 3. The principle of chaos is also mentioned in discussing alternative models for entrepreneurship in fragment 4 (see Stevenson & Harmeling, 1990).

[7] See also Cooper (1986) for an expanded view on 'disorganization'.

organization library, since there is at present a whole new series of books being published in the organization field, inspired by the body of thought generated by the French language philosophers Barthes, Derrida, Foucault, and their colleagues Lyotard and Baudrillard: Cooper and Burrell (1988), Power (1990), Clegg (1990), Parker (1992), Reed and Hughes (1992), Bergquist (1993), Hassard and Parker (1994), Hassard (1994)... For the present project, it is of special importance to place the 'linguistic turn' in a nuanced perspective and to indicate its influence on this study. For the rest, let us leave this new part alone for the moment, since we must first look into the organization of the library separately from these new extensions.

Visit three: organizing a library

A: At the end of the last visit somebody asked how the library is organized. The ordering of the library is one of the most systematic attempts to arrange and store our knowledge. This is a most complicated question, which leads us to consult books that try to describe other books and connect them to one another. We use a catalogue, which at first glance has the tendency to take on the status of a meta-book. We want to come up with something more than just an inventory of ideas, models, and books; we want to systematize books, comparing them on the basis of their similarities and differences, and pointing out their underlying structure. We are looking for the answer to the question of what the rules of construction are for assembling different 'complete knowledge systems'. It is a question of recognizing epistemological systems - so-called paradigms - by which differences in theoretical visions and knowledge-construction are linked. The framework of Burrell and Morgan (1979) dealing with paradigms in organization analysis is, as I have said, one of the better-known attempts to order the theoretical diversity. Put concisely, Burrell and Morgan argue that researching and giving shape to our way of looking at the world (and at organizations) can be described in two dimensions: the subjectivist/objectivist dimension and the regulation/radical-change dimension. The first dimension describes our assumptions about the nature of science in subjectivist/objectivist terms. A subjectivist and objectivist approach to science differ from one another ontologically, epistemologically, and methodologically, and on the level of assumptions about human nature:

(1) ontology: deals with the essence of the phenomenon of research; is seen as either nominalist or realist

(2) epistemology: deals with the basis of our knowledge; is either anti-positivist or positivist

(3) methodology: refers to the way knowledge about the world as society is developed; methods can be classified from ideographic to nomothetic

(4) human nature: refers to the relation between people and their environment; this can be either voluntarist or determinist.

The second dimension describes two alternatives for society in terms of regulation/radical change. The regulation alternative sees society as coherent and harmonious, in pursuit of order and stability. The second alternative focuses on the radical change that is possible in society, and on the factors which could play a role in this, such as power and conflict. By combining both dimensions, Burrell and Morgan come up with four paradigms in which social organization theories can be integrated: the functionalist, the radical structuralist, the interpretive, and the radical humanist.

However, it will presently become clear that a meta-book may not be written quite so quickly. This is especially noticeable in the course of this tour which of itself is already claiming to be a catalogue of other catalogues, but which is turning out to be just one more book on the shelf. Maas (1988) has compared five different kinds of cataloguing systems: besides Burrell and Morgan's paradigmatic categorization (1979), he also mention Peters and Waterman's management theory categorization (1982), Astley and Van de Ven's categorization (1983), Morgan's metaphorical categorization (1986), and finally Pfeffer's categorization (1985). There they are standing together in a row. These are by no means all the possible systems, however; we have only to think of Bolman and Deal or Tsoukas. The conclusion that the methods of ordering differ widely brings up a long list of objections and criticisms of these converging classification systems (Maas, 1988, p. 36-38): the classifications play right into the hands of fragmentation, forcing perspectives to be closed off, and thus prevent any kind of complete overview; with their division into four they create a closed representation, as if no new perspectives could arise. The most important objection is that the categorizations do not stimulate theory development, but bear a risk of actually blocking it: the divisions make for a static and reifying image. Equally striking is the stereotyped representation in four-part fields (except for Pfeffer, who gives us six), ordered according to two dually arranged dimensions. It is as if the form strait-jackets the content, and that if we as organization authors wish to get a new perspective on the theoretical field of organizations, we should first learn how to draw. More crucial yet is the conclusion that paradigmatic reasoning only seems to shift the question around. There is not only a jungle of theoretical perspectives out there, as Koontz (1980) remarks, or a struggle between schools, as Maas has said: there is a struggle about the struggle.

Q: Is there a solution to this shifting around?

A: A concept such as a 'struggle between schools' shows that personal perspectives have been strenuously fought for in the past, and that one's own standpoint was defended in a highly

protectionist manner, which had the result of developing neither one's own nor anyone else's vision. There is thus a need for a dialogue between the perspectives, rather than a struggle. This also requires us to concentrate less on ordering and more on the process of ordering. To make this clearer, we must broach the theme of the incommensurability between paradigms, the idea that paradigms must above all mind their own business and be prevented from talking to one another. This is the difficult but intriguing debate for our fourth visit.

Visit four: organizing a library, a few remarks

A: Today we shall formulate a few remarks on the question of whether paradigms can converse with one another and how they can accomplish this. The paradigmatic divisions of Burrell and Morgan (1979) and others have led to a long stream of publications dealing with the question of how paradigms relate to one another. Burrell and Morgan (1979) have themselves said that "*a synthesis between paradigms cannot be achieved*" and that paradigms should develop independently from one another; that is, so-called 'incommensurability'. Generally speaking, we can distinguish two basic approaches to the way paradigms can relate to each other. Some have further developed Burrell and Morgan's basic approach, denying that paradigms can either be compared or reconciled with one another (Jackson & Carter, 1991). Others see a possible form of reconciliation, albeit in greatly varying forms. This ranges from unification, a contingency perspective (Sminia, 1990), and pluralism (Morgan, 1986, 1990), to complementarism (Hassard, 1991), multi-paradigmatism (Gioia & Pitre, 1990), and metaparadigmatism (Feltmann, 1992). For some, paradigms are indeed 'oceans' apart, for others, clearly not, but the problem of how the crossing can be made receives vastly differing 'solutions'.

Q: Why wouldn't this conversing be possible?

A: Jackson and Carter (1991) formulate a number of arguments around this question. They are on the cutting edge when it comes to defending the 'incommensurablity' of paradigms. For this they employ two basic arguments. The first argument is principled and logical. I quote: "*Yet incommensurability is not negotiable, it is a characteristic of the model.*" This incommensurability guards the integrity of each paradigm that, independently of any other, can choose its own way. Again I quote: "*What it implies is that each paradigm must, logically, develop separately, pursuing its own problematic and ignoring those of other paradigms as paradigmatically invalid*" (p. 110). Burrell and Morgan's scheme is an intellectual structure and in no way a technique of analysis that one can simply apply at will. Their argument is divergent and synchronous: we are dealing here with more than one paradigm all simultaneously valid. Jackson and Carter point out that in contrast with Kuhn's approach, this one leads via the principle of thesis/antithesis/synthesis towards a convergent and diachronistic vision. In general, Kuhn's incommensurability is only temporary, while it is a permanent characteristic of the model for Burrell and Morgan. Their second argument is pragmatic: the model has practical historical and emancipatory values. "*It serves to protect actual plurality of modes of scientific enquiry from the imperialistic aspirations of an orthodoxy.*" The stakes are high in this argument: "*What we risk is the re-establishment of the dichotomy between science and non-science, determined by a totalitarian scientism which claims the exclusive right to define what is science*" (p. 121). Anyone who rejects incommensurability on logical grounds is prohibited from doing this on ideological grounds: if not, the dominance of functionalism will be confirmed. They fear the threat of "*a self-validating professional elite who themselves decide upon criteria of access to the profession, and, more importantly, who control that access*" (p. 121). End quote. Pluralism is not possible because it is always gets its wings clipped by those in power.

Q: But shouldn't scholarship strive for some form of universalism?

A: That is indeed the motive, even if somewhat paradigmatically colored - but you don't have to write that down - of those who, in diametric opposition to the strict position of incommensurability, adopt the position that the paradigms are ultimately reconcilable and can be brought together in one conceptual frame of reference: the so-called unification idea. Within psychology, this point of view has been interpreted by Staats (1981) on the basis of a methodological advance; within the organization field this standpoint has been less fully argued. We shall, as a result, explore differing approaches which champion one form or another of 'confluence'.

Q: Some have unified the organization literature using metaphors...

A: For this we can look to Morgan's later work (1986). He makes an original synthesis of organization theories by accommodating them under a number of basic metaphors or 'images of organizations'. He employs a pluralistic arrangement to accomplish this. However, pluralism is not an unambiguous notion (Playford, 1971), and many have made use of this epithet. Reed (1985), whom we have already cited in previous visits, has suggested, amongst other things, that "*the primary mission of pluralism is to steer a middle course between structural determinism and cognitive relativism.*" At first glance, Morgan would not appear to be treading the (golden) middle way between functionalism and social constructionism, but rather, envisages a multi-perspectivistic approach. We have here rid ourselves of the intention of seeking the 'best' theory or the most enlightening theory. This multiplicity of theories is not seen as a diversity which must be reduced, but as a richness of images which is to be valued and can serve as so many pairs of glasses for 'reading' organizations. This is also inherent in a metaphorical approach, since a metaphor can be seen as a world in itself, with its own

demarcated discursive power. Morgan seems to me prototypical of an attitude which would allow all theories to exist parallel with one another - pluralism - and thereby, in comparison with his analysis together with Burrell from 1979, dispenses with the attendant tensions between them. But you don't have to note this last point either.

Q: Can research thus provide no definite answer?

A: Hassard (1991, 1988) is one person who has approached the paradigm debate in an empirical manner. He follows Morgan's pluralistic path, and 'operationalizes' it in his study of British fire departments. The author himself proposes a number of objections against this operationalization, but for us it is important to determine whether Hassard sheds new light on the discussion of positioning. I am of the opinion that rather than practicing a form of pluralism he is tending towards complemantarism or eclecticism. He 'sums up', as it were, the insights into organizations that each of the four paradigmatic research applications leads to. His complementaristic attitude is also evident from his statement that *after* research one should run through the various applications of the paradigms in a particular order. Although undertakings such as Hassard's are rather seldom found, his approach seems to indicate that there is no empirical way out of this debate. In his application he loses every dialogue - every tension - between the paradigms. This is largely attributable to the fact that he has adopted a different research topic for each paradigm. In this way, knowledge is conceived of cumulatively rather than dialectically.

Q: Could it be possible that not all paradigms are equally valid?

A: Sminia (1990) holds that union is possible by emphasizing the complementarity of different, even epistemologically incompatible theories. Instead of trying to look at an organization with many pairs of glasses at once, *à la* Morgan, Sminia believes that one can and must chose a particular perspective in function of situational circumstances. He bases this on the work of the Italian Anna Grandori (1984, 1987). The point of departure is equally the further 'compartmentalization' of organization theory (Kee, 1988). This process can however be turned around using a contingency perspective. It is not thought that every theory can deliver the same degree of insight in every situation. A way out is offered by making use of rival pairs of glasses depending on the situation. Relevant contingency factors are related to the choice of possibilities, to cost/benefit analysis, and to unreliability of information and resources. In this way, the three 'different' possibilities for change - i.e., the use of rational design, natural selection, and organizational learning - can be gathered 'under one denominator'. *A priori* objective rational designs (functionalism) and *a posteriori* 'organizational learning', including the enactment process (social constructionism), are here presented as extensions of one another. The organization theories employed by Sminia (1990), the trans-action-cost approach (Williamson, 1975), the resource dependence approach (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978), the population ecology approach (Hannan & Freeman, 1977), or the indeterministic approach (Cohen, March & Olson, 1972; Weick, 1979) are thus divided up on the basis of a 'rational' and an 'objective' choice. It seems clear to me that such a perspective based on choice, and the way it proceeds, implies a hard and fast determinism. This implication is however not necessary, as we can think of a contingency perspective that instead of opting for a rational choice model, acknowledges the intersubjective nature of considering different paradigms contextually.

Q: How *would* you then make connections between books?

A: The books about books that we took off the shelves attempt to classify books by underpinning them paradigmatically, naming them metaphorically, linking them to world hypotheses, or cataloguing them according to contents. But that sort of metastructure often builds walls and separates approaches which in turn can lead to neighbourhood disputes, as we have seen. I should like to propose the idea of mediating texts and look for ways to make intertextuality more explicit. This idea is implicitly present in Gioia and Pitre (1990).
They start from the conception of what they call a multi-paradigmatic approach and deal with the question of "*how multiple views created by different paradigms can be linked, or at least juxtaposed, to yield a more comprehensive view of organizational phenomena*" (p. 585). They continue: "*The fundamental incommensurability of the paradigms often leads to a fragmentation and provincialism in the field*" (p. 591). They propose a pluralistic approach: "*Given that a uniquely correct perspective cannot exist, and given the multiplicity of organizational realities, a* pluralistic, *multi-perspectives view becomes a necessity*" (p. 595). Furthermore, they assume that however fundamentally different paradigms may be, it should be possible to achieve some degree of 'limited bridging'. There is an important twilight zone where different paradigms meld with one another, since we are here dealing with dimensions and it is difficult to show clearly where the subjective conception runs over into the objective. With this the authors burst the bubble of dualistic thinking that underlies the principle of incommensurability. But they go a step further than merely paying attention to the points of contact and border-zone overlapping; they suggest the idea of an overarching paradigm - a metaparadigm -: "*Elevating to a metaperspective is qualitatively different from cross-boundary consideration. For this view, the intent is to understand, to accommodate, and if possible, to link views generated from different starting assumptions*" (p. 595-596). I believe that a metaparadigm reopens the door to unification. In my opinion, Gioia and Pitre abandon too quickly their quest for the meaning of such concepts as 'linking', 'limited bridging', 'juxtaposition', and 'boundary consideration'. Such research implies a shift in focus towards the process of categorizing, partly to counter the effect of reification while making the

simultaneous development of paradigms possible. This idea has been recently applied by Schultz and Hatch (1994) in their analysis of organization culture. They advance the notion of 'paradoxical interplay' as a simultaneous and paradoxical dialogue between paradigms. The result is "*a much more fluid or nomadic situation where a shifting number of positions and researchers interact depending on the field studied.*" This sort of dialogue is for me inherently bound to local research contexts. In this connection I am put in mind of Maas's remark that the paradigm debate is all too often placed outside of a social context, while the development of a paradigm is dependent on 'moments of organizing' and social encounters, more than on intra-paradigmatic research. The social process of multi-paradigmatic development demands a dialogue which makes mutual development possible. Jackson and Carter (1991, p. 123) nonetheless recognize that you can't have one without the other: "*Competing paradigms constitute for each other an Otherness which gives each paradigm its specific identity.*" This is precisely the point of departure of our argument - the unbreakable relationship - which holds that the independent development of paradigms has no epistemological basis, and we are thus forced to go in search of a simultaneous view through dialogical overbridging. There is here no more room for walls, only for shifting transitions; for, "*books are palimpsests, and writers paleographers. The 'thinking' of the border is paleonymy. 'Thinking' the border is not thinking the end and the goal, the origin and the source, but is rather 'thinking' the difference, the reference, the deviation, the repetition. Thus, it is not 'thinking', but a productive crossing out of thinking. Impossible work, impossible place. There is no place - better yet: there can be no place - for the 'thinking' of the border*" (Herman Parret, 1975, p. 182).[8] The domain of organization studies may not be encompassed or encircled. We have arrived in the middle of the library. The only encircling of the library would be its destruction, not its development...

[8] "*Boeken zijn palimpsesten, en schrijvers paleografen. Het 'denken' van de grens is paleonymie. De grens 'denken' is niet het einde en het doel, de oorsprong en de bron denken, maar het 'denken' van het verschil, van de verwijzing, van de afwijking, van de herhaling. Geen denken dus, maar produktieve doorstreping van het denken. Onmogelijke arbeid, onmogelijke plaats. Er is geen plaats - en nog: er mag geen plaats zijn - voor het 'denken' van de grens.*"

Fragment Three

Organization as 'Flux', or, You Never Step Twice in the Same Organization

The Flow of Knowledge

In the fragment entitled The Organization Library, I have made an account of how knowledge about organizations is not *a priori* valid or useful. In the library everything is within reach, but nothing is present if a reader does not borrow and read. Knowledge becomes actualized anew and inscribed in the context of a research practice or practical activities. Knowledge is not a finished product that can be stored until the 'best before' date has passed (e.g. when a new theory appears), and that until then can be used at any moment. Knowledge-in-becoming. This implies that we are in search of books with a dynamic understanding of organizations, which becomes for us an important criterion for deciding whether to borrow a book or not. What exactly can be borrowed here? In answering this question we can more fully ascertain what is meant by a process conception of organization, by an organization-in-motion which is on the move more than it stays still, by an organization that travels more than it is sedentary. Here, then, is a first opportunity to visit our organization library and indicate our preferences. We loan based on author's name, knowing that behind each of these names other names lie hidden: Heraclitus, Whitehead, Morgan, and Weick, who approach meaning respectively through Chuang Tzu and Nietzsche, Peirce and Hartshorne, Marx and Vaill, and Vickers and Weick post 1979, and many more. Such references are both recurrent and procurrent: we speak of Heraclitus and of Nietzsche, and of what Nietzsche said about Heraclitus. What's more, as first-time readers of this dissertation, we see the challenge in starting a dialogue between these authors and entering into dialogue with them ourselves. In this way, as researcher, you become involved with a particular research and thought culture and you can succeed in creating new meaning in relation to what others have written 'before' you. To paraphrase Geertz, a researcher is "*an animal suspended in webs of books and names he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretative one in search of meaning.*"[1] As we search for the meaning of process thinking and a process vision of entrepreneurship, we must become trapped like flies in the web of contributions to the study of processes.

[1] See Geertz (1973, p. 5), where he speaks of 'webs of significance'.

As a starting point, two philosophical sources dealing in a process-vision of reality will be addressed: Heraclitus and Whitehead. After this, I shall pass by way of Morgan's flux chapter and one of the most emphatic process theories of organization, to be found in Weick. I shall then consider three implications for the way in which the organization processes of entrepreneurial endeavors can be formulated in this study: the need for a process language, a dilemmatic approach to the organization process, and a focus on the 'event' as central to the organizing process.

The Flow of Reality: Philosophical Traces

Heraclitus and the river

A first way to introduce the flux metaphor calls for a basic image by means of which the organization-in-motion may be represented; that is, the image of a river. This image is attributed to Heraclitus in his utterance, *panta rhei*, that links his 'everything flows and nothing abides' with the flowing river: "*You cannot step twice into the same river, for other waters are continually flowing on*" (Morgan, 1986). With this sentiment, Heraclitus becomes one of the earliest Western philosophers to postulate a process of becoming as the basic reality of the world. This idea of the world in a state of continuous change brings him close to Eastern philosophy. The larger context of his utterance shows this even more clearly: "*Everything flows and nothing abides; everything gives way and nothing stays fixed... Cool things become warm, the warm grows cool; the moist dries, the parched becomes moist... It is in changing that things find repose*" (Morgan, 1986). Heraclitus here recognizes the succession of stability and change, and suggests how change is a succession of opposites. These opposites form a unity, for "*the way up and the way down is the same... God is day/night, winter/summer, war/peace, satiety/hunger*",[2] an idea that is closely allied with Taoism (Capra, 1988).

The writings of Heraclitus of Ephesus, who lived around 500 B.C., have been preserved in fragments, cited as sayings or aphorisms by other Classical authors such as Aristotle, Clement of Alexandria, Hyppolytus, Marcus Aurelius, Plato, and Plutarch. Verhoeven (1993), who takes care to remain as close as possible to the original Heraclitus, notes that there exist a great many problems of translation, interpretation, and situating around these fragments. The connecting and juxtaposition of fragments, for instance, lead to quite different cycles of interpretation. There is also disagreement over whether Heraclitus actually wrote in aphorisms, or whether he presented a coherent argument of which only a few parts remain.

[2] Quoted in Capra (1988, p. 113).

Verhoeven even suggests that the well-known *panta rhei* may be incorrectly ascribed to Heraclitus. Furthermore, Heraclitus figures prominently in the philosophical work of Hegel, Nietzsche, Bergson, and Heidegger, amongst others, which has in turn led to new interpretations. A version much in use today is that of Nietzsche, who contrasts Heraclitus' dynamic vision with Parmenides', and makes a radical choice for Heraclitus' side. In contrast to this process of becoming, Parmenides of Elea emphasized the world's unchangeable aspect of being, and saw change as an illusion (Capra, 1988). In this way it becomes clear that the underlying ideas of 'organization as flux' are quite venerable, with their roots in the oldest Western and Eastern philosophy.

We shall now make a sizable leap forward in the history of philosophy for a short reading of a more systematically elaborated notion of process.

Process philosophy in Whitehead and Hartshorne

A second philosophical branch of the flux metaphor is found in so-called 'process philosophy' which is strongly associated with the name of Alfred North Whitehead and his central work *Process and Reality* (1929), as well as with that of Charles Hartshorne, who introduced the English Whitehead into the United States, calling him far and away the most important metaphysician of this century.[3] That sort of claim is easy to make; Whitehead himself held that one of the most important tasks of metaphysics was to clarify the concept that 'everything flows'.[4] I do not wish to take time here to expound on Whitehead's philosophical theory, but I will touch on a few of the basic notions, enough to suggest a philosophical and cosmological framework for the process view of organizations. Whitehead further linked a dynamic approach to reality with creativity, as did Hartshorne.[5] This is a second reason to mention process philosophy, since it provides a key for answering our research question. There is a third reason to discuss Whitehead: the important role he ascribed to the notion of the 'event', which gives us a major tool for crystallizing our conception of organizing and the knowledge of organizations. Whitehead's process philosophy, which sought integration with developments from the mathematical and positive sciences,[6] such as theories of evolution, relativity, and quantum mechanics (Cloots, 1986), is invoked in turn to provide a philosophical framework for evolutions in physics (Prigogine &

[3] "*To me it is really obvious that as metaphysican Whitehead has in this century had no superior, and I question if there has been even a close competitor. [...] none of them (even Heidegger), equals Whitehead in conceptual clarity and relevance to our total intellectual situation*". (Hartshorne, 1984, p. 103).
[4] See Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, part 2, chapter 10.
[5] In this connection, see Hartshorne's *Creativity in American Philosophy* (1984), one of his last books.
[6] From physics to metaphysics: Whitehead (1861 - 1947) worked out his philosophical and theological ideas only towards the end of his life after he had been long active chiefly in the area of mathematics and the positive sciences. It is interesting to note that only eight years lie between *Science and the Modern World* (1925) and *Adventures of Ideas* (1933) - a period when he also wrote *Religion in the Making* (1926), and *Process and Reality* (1929).

Stengers, 1990). Finally, his work, together with that of Bergson, among others, has recently been seen as compatible with a social constructionist approach to reality (Bouwen, 1994; Gulerce, 1994).

Whitehead takes reality's quality of becoming as his main philosophical point of departure. Reality is always in movement and changing; it is an adventure. "*Whitehead's basic intuition is that all reality is in the first place an event, a creating becoming. 'To be' is 'to become'. Actuality is activity*" (Cloots, 1986, p. 78-79). In order to describe and translate this 'becoming', Whitehead goes in search of words that are capable of expressing becoming, or more precisely, of showing how becoming always occurs in connection to something. Whitehead uses the terms 'event' or 'actual occasion' to describe this. Thus the word 'event', better than 'thing', for example, or 'substance' "*indicates that whatever is in the process of becoming, whatever is coming into existence ('e-venire'), is not something that exists in itself, but is relational in its deepest essence*" (Cloots, 1986, p. 79). Reality can then be seen as a succession of alternations of events, where each event contains a possible synthesis of previous events, but where other events can also be formed on their own. Reality propels itself forward through events. Prigogine and Stengers (1990) speak of a philosophy of the 'innovative becoming' to summarize Whitehead's ideas.

How did Whitehead conceive of this 'creative becoming'? He wanted to direct science towards thinking in terms of 'becoming' instead of 'being', without eradicating the level of entities. Creative becoming, reality-in-the-making, is a process that may be situated between unity and multiplicity; such a unity creates out of the multiplicity of possibilities. Cloots speaks of a rhythmic play of unit and plurality. An event is a world in itself, which integrates the previous world in a particular way and allows a 'growing together'. In *Process and Reality*, Whitehead makes the distinction between different events or manners in which this integration can come into existence. The category of the ultimate arises when "*the many become one and are increased by one.*" Every existing entity unites the multiplicity of the world and thus creates identity and meaning out of its relationship with other entities and parts. Conversely, new possibilities come into existence out of 'that which has become', and the created event becomes involved with what is in turn being created anew, creating yet another new event.

Whitehead sees this unbroken sequence of becoming as a creative process, which leads to a "*creative advance into novelty*" and not to a determined, externally driven result. He approaches reality not only as (f)actuality, but also as 'possibility': "*Process philosophy takes becoming as creative in precisely that sense in which classical determinism denies creativity. Creativity is the production of new definiteness. It is the ultimate or universal form of emergence*" (Hartshorne, 1984, p. 104). Reality is not only to be understood as that which must be represented, or as something of which one becomes conscious; reality assumes a series of possibilities. Whitehead calls this understanding 'prehension' or "*the most concrete mode of relatedness.*" Such a form of 'com*prehension*' or 'grasping'[7] is closely allied with an intuitive knowing or sensing. The grasping of an event has both physical and mental poles by which, respectively, actuality and possibility are incorporated into the apprehension of reality. The relation between what happens and what could happen can change the balance, but the poles of possibility are always present, no matter how limited the room for this virtual 'order' may be become. As minimal as this may seem, every reality is active creation, and bears creativity in it. Whitehead thus accords creativity a central and, most important, an essential role to play: it is part of the essence of becoming. Cloots (1986, p. 85-86) portrays Whitehead's thought on creativity as follows: "*Everything that exists is an instance of creativity. Apart from creativity there is nothing, for everything - in the domain of the possible as well - must be understood in this way. [...] Creativity, thus, does not exist 'outside' or 'above' creative realities. It exists only in its instances. Nonetheless, it is never exhausted in what actually exists, but is precisely linked to that wondrous phenomenon of reality as a continuously proceeding, continually becoming, and continually creating event, a progressing realization. Unity from multiplicity, but at the same time multiplicity from unity: being from becoming, but equally again, becoming from being. Reality comes ever afresh into existence.*"

This form of creativity, which orients reality towards renewal and adventure, also 'bears' Whitehead's conception of science and knowledge-construction[8] on the one hand, and his vision of religion and the meaning of the Godly on the other.

Having provided this extremely short philosophical situating of the flux metaphor, I shall amplify it within the organization context, on the basis of Morgan's work and using a more specific process theory of organizing as outlined by Weick.

The Flow of Organizing: Towards a Process Theory of Organization

You never step twice in the same organization

A central book in this discussion is *Images of Organization*, which may be seen as an organization library all on its own, constructed according to the principle of the metaphor - eight of them in total (Steyaert, 1992b). Of all the metaphors that Morgan has incorporated into *Images of Organization*, the flux metaphor is probably the most radical, as it represents the change from a static to a dynamic vision of organizations, from a variables to a process

[7] Translator's note: The Dutch for 'to understand' is '*begrijpen*', which connotes the notion of 'grasping' ('*grijpen*'; cf. German '*be-greiffen*').
[8] His notion of science places the emphasis on the relational process rather than 'bits of matter', on finality rather than causality, on indeterminism and probability rather than determinism, on subjectivity, not objectivity (Cloots, 1986).

approach. Morgan uses the well-known story of the elephant and the blind fakirs to show how every metaphor can only provide a partial view of the functioning of organizations, and to recommend and learn how to use a multi-perspectivist reading of organizations, in the same way that the blind men had to go to work to figure out that they were standing in front of an elephant. The radical difference of the flux metaphor becomes clear when together with Vaill (1984) we begin to realize that the elephant is not standing still but walking around.

The need for a process language: 'organization' becomes 'organizing'

In Weick (1979), in the context of his 'social psychology of organizing', the word 'organization' disappears, as it were, and he uses the verb 'organize', to create a dynamic conception, a practice which I am following. For Weick, verbs are crucial in describing process: "*Motion, change, and the flow of time would not be apparent without the verb and verb forms*" (p. 43). The development of organization theories involves the language we employ, and how we are able to 'think up' and change things. Weick believes that our language too often imposes stability; his remedies are on the level of form: "*In the interest of better organizational understanding we should urge people to stamp out nouns. If students of organization become stingy in their use of nouns, generous in their use of verbs, and extravagant in their use of gerunds, then more attention would be paid to process and we'd learn about how to see it and manage it*" (p. 44). 'Organization' becomes 'organizing'. Companies are increasingly speaking in terms of flows of material, money, time, solutions, problems, choices, and so on. Change, rather than stability, is the rule for every organization. People live in a constant stream of events, and it is these streams, these changes, this flux, that constitute the essence of the task of organizing.

Similarly, Weick finds the metaphor of the river to be appropriate, if it is applied subtlely, for the use of a process language implies in the first place that members of an organization be sensitive to the way the meanings of utterances can shift and flow. In this connection he refers to Vickers (1967, p. 68): "*The proverb has it that we never step twice into the same river. It is equally true that we never go to work twice in the same undertaking. It is also equally false; for these words 'river' and 'undertaking' do not denote unchanging substances, but continuing forms. The language of business and administration is full of such words. [...] All are descriptive of relationships. There is nothing unusual in this. The familiar forms of language conceal from us the extent to which the objects of our attention are not 'things' but relations extended in time. I stress this, because the most essential common characteristic of the administrator's job in any organization is that he has to regulate a process extended in time.*"

Dilemmas as the dynamics of the organizing process

In order to work out the idea of the organization as flux, Morgan makes use of three images of change. Striking is that in contrast with other metaphors he describes, he here beats the fringes of the organization domain, or in fact goes outside it altogether. He points out that process thinking has still been little applied in organization research. With the first approach he finds himself in biology, in the autopoietic systems as described by Maturana and Varela. The second image, borrowed from cybernetics, deals with the circular character of systems and their change. A third model, that goes back to Taoist philosophy, is concentrated on the study of opposites, and represents change in organizations as a dialectical process, inspired by Hegelian or Marxist analysis. This third image, which also appears in the philosophy of Heraclitus and Whitehead, can be singled out as one of the basic concepts of a process theory of organization. This demands a study of the status of dilemmas within organization theory (Steyaert & Janssens, under revision). In my opinion, a possible way to 'operationalize' organization studies in terms of process consists of describing which dilemmas, dualities, and paradoxes are present, and showing how they function within and give shape to the organization process.

With the suggested use of dilemmas, we are in good company, since the challenges of organizational life and related organization theories are more and more approached in terms of dilemmas (Hampden-Turner, 1990), paradoxes (Cameron & Quinn, 1988; Poole & Van de Ven, 1989), and dualities (Evans & Doz, 1992). These concepts are all bipolar with two distinguishable and indissoluble parts. Together with the introduction of such fundamental notions as dilemmas, paradoxes and dualities, many related terms such as tensions, opposites, contradictions, dichotomies, polarities and ambiguities can be noticed in the daily vocabulary of organization theory and practice. Some scholars have even suggested 'the dual organization' or the 'dualistic enterprise' as a possible overarching organizational form (Cameron & Quinn, 1988; Evans & Doz, 1992; Hampden-Turner, 1990). The challenges of organizational life such as structural transitions, internationalization, and technological complexity, require the building of tension into the process of organizing (Steyaert & Janssens, under revision).

For Hampden-Turner (1990), a company's added value lies in its ability to reconcile *dilemmas* strategically. He argues that dilemmas appear and reappear in constantly changing forms, and are able to chart the corporate mind. Cameron and Quinn (1988) were among the first to affirm the growing occurrence of *paradox* in organization theory. They state that organizational theory and research can no longer ignore the contradictory nature of organizations if they are to explain organizational and managerial behavior adequately.

Poole and Van de Ven (1989) also make a plea for the use of paradoxes to enliven current organization theory. They argue that new insights can be developed by searching for and working with inconsistencies, contradictions, and tensions, and the relationships between them. Evans and Doz (1992) regard *dualities* as a 'pervasive feature' in the development of complex organizations, and more fundamentally, as the expression of an emerging paradigm for organization in the nineties. After the period of structuring and ordering in the 50s and the 60s, and after the principle of fit, match, and consistency in the 70s and early 80s, dualities are seen as an appropriate principle for theorizing about organizations confronted with the turbulent, complex and highly competitive environment which characterizes the high tech context in particular.

Although Poole and Van de Ven (1989) claim that much of contemporary organizational theory is still struggling to live with paradoxes, the dilemmatic nature of organizations can be noticed in very different areas of organizational theory. This 'thinking-in-two' has been explored and elaborated in business contexts such as innovation (Galbraith, 1982; Fryxell, 1990; Bouwen & Fry, 1991), information technology (Peters, 1992a), organizational development and change (Evans & Doz, 1992; Quinn & Cameron, 1988; Srivastva et al., 1992; Westenholz, 1993), organizational effectiveness (Quinn & Cameron, 1983), team management (Hirschhorn & Gilmore, 1992), group dynamics (Smith & Berg, 1987), culture (Hofstede, 1980; 1992), human resource development (Evans & Doz, 1992), and strategic thinking (Hampden-Turner, 1990). In a review of this literature, Steyaert and Janssens (under revision) have collected an impressive list of dualities which are ordered into a conceptual framework that is both theoretically clear and pragmatically useful. Their conceptual framework distinguishes structural, cultural and personal dualities.

The event[9] as central to the organizing process

The image of the organization as flow in Weick is equally the image of "*multiple, heterogenous flows of diverse viscosity moving at variable rates.*" This is a process in time, changing itself in the relations between elements: "*Streams, flows and changes are the essence of what managers manage.*" Process approaches make "*short-lived appearances that soon resolve into other appearances.*" Organizing is about connecting episodes of social interaction, via 'recipes'. "*Thus processes are assembled from flows, directed at flows, and summarize flows.*" These episodes or short-lived appearances are comparable to the event in Whitehead's philosophy. The event may be offered as the most concrete junction in the organization process. Going in search of the event reflects a drive to learn to see organizations as creative acts, getting a grip on the organization-in-the-making. When we look at how organizations balance between actuality and possibility, we are searching for an answer to the question of how enterprises create themselves not only from a synthesis of the past but also from their ability to see themselves (or not) in what they may yet become. To lead a company is to take up an invitation to make 'more' of it than what it is and what it otherwise would remain. It is to see the unit which is every organization as the result of a multiplicity which continually opens itself to a new unit. Our research question about the way organizations can maintain their innovatory power, is closely allied to Whitehead's question of how the world develops itself as a 'creative advance into novelty'. For me, a study of 'high techs' forms a 'natural' space to look at this relationship between the real and the possible, between actuality and potentiality.

Beyond entity-thinking[10]

Kimberly (1988, p. 164-165) summarizes well what is involved in understanding organizations by means of the flux metaphor: "*Understandings, in my view, do not have clearly demarcated beginnings and endings. They are characterized much more by flows than they are by sequences. And, [...] I believe that organizational life is captured much more usefully and fully by models, theories, perspectives, or frames which emphasize flows rather than discrete events, sequences, or stages.*" The central objective and at once the most difficult task here consists of taking theorizing about organizations past entity-thinking and to move beyond static, reifying concepts. What does this entail? Going beyond entity-thinking - easily floating along with the wild flow of the business world - means reconsidering the idea that we can 'design' organizations, along with everything which accompanies such an endeavor: building, delineating, planning, committing to paper beforehand, 'engineering', setting up and putting together, tinkering, laying a foundation... To think of organizations in terms of building and buildings, to understand organizations through references to architecture[11] - this is a dead-end street if applied to an attempt at a process approach. Design literature on organizations, which is just now so much in evidence, must be done away with. Or at least it needs to be greeted and nuanced with the necessary reservations, something Vaill (1976) had a handle on a good while ago[12]: "*Design behavior is, in fact, much more creative and unpredictable than our culture would have us believe. The term 'engineering' derives from the same root as 'ingenuity'. What is it that the*

[9] There has recently been a growing interest in the 'event' as a unit of study; this is evident in studies of the way managers construct organizational events as a change unfolds (Isabella, 1990). In a more fundamental sense, the event forms a central link in narrative theory (Gergen, 1994) and is for Deleuze the cornerstone of a so-called 'philosophie de l'évenement' as an answer to the question of what the nature of the event is (Zourabichvili, 1994).

[10] There is here no place to situate this trend within the present postmodernist image of time, in which the solid feeling of a stable world slips away ever more quickly. For such a situating, I refer the reader to *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air* (Steyaert, 1994c).

[11] Architecture itself is attempting to evolve past static building design (see Bergquist, 1993; Bolle, 1992).

[12] Vaill was not the only one, however. For example, Winograd and Flores (1987) have sought a new 'underpinning' for design, in which they inscribe computer design, artificial intelligence, and technology-at-work in a human and linguistic context - that of meaning and conversation.

designer is really doing? Terms like 'groping', 'intuiting', 'experimenting', come readily to mind. Perhaps the design of physical and/or mechanical entities, is a quasi deductive process, but the designs of organizations in which human beings are going to live and work certainly is not." Going beyond entity-thinking means going in search of a new, suggestive language, which allows one to speak in terms of movement and transition (Hosking & Morley, 1991; Weick, 1979). It is once again Vaill (1991) who, in one of the most powerful attempts to give substance to process vision of organizations,[13] manages to come up with many pertinent questions. He here indicates just how searching the process perspective is, while his opting for the question form illustrates precisely what a process vision is all about: "*Can we release some of our cherished fixities in order that we can navigate more easily in the white water? Can we release the fixity of our facts and knowledge, for one thing, and come to see them instead in all their relativity? Can we release the fixity of our role and see ourselves more as an inventor of our job than a performer of a preexisting list of duties? Can we release our structural fixity, drop the assumption of our prerogatives in a hierarchical position, and instead see ourselves as just another player in what is in fact one big network?*" (p. 84).

These questions concern a good deal of present-day organization knowledge, which has been making this 180 degree turn for some time now. Most organization theories, including those on change in organizations, have been oriented towards stability. Change-projects have covered nothing more than temporary transitional periods, in which an organization is shuttled from one stable situation to another (Steyaert, 1994c). A large part of organization theory (Hosking & Morley, 1991; Sims, Fineman & Gabriel, 1993; Vaill, 1991; Weick, 1979) is being reappraised, giving the idea of flux its due, a most pressing task in light of the ever more quickly changing organization forms (Reed, 1992). In order to develop this sort of process-oriented conceptualization - or better, conceptualizing - of the organization process in enterprises, I shall draw on Weick's theory, which may be seen as one of the most thoroughly worked out process theories (Colville, 1994).

Conclusion: the Way In Is Also the Way Out

Organization theory is making a shift from 'organization' to 'organizing'. Organizing is conceived here as a social, sensemaking process where order and disorder are in constant tension with one another (Sims, Fineman & Gabriel, 1993). To give a name to the process of organizing without reifying it, three principles have been retained: the use of a process language, an operationalization in terms of dilemmas, and a focus on the event in the organization flow. These principles all flow together, to use the river image that I have kept in sight while studying entrepreneurship, and direct us to go beyond 'entity-thinking'. To paraphrase Heraclitus we can state that 'you never step twice into the same organization'. The organization may seem to be the same, but in the meantime a good deal of water has streamed out to sea: experiences are written everyday, dialogues carried on unbroken. Organizations are striking in their seeming stability, but their mutability and fluidity should be seen as the norm and not as the exception.

I have taken this perspective and its three accompanying principles as a point of departure from which to view the organization process of entrepreneurship. What do I mean by 'point of departure'? From a process point of view it cannot here be a matter of *a prioris* which are formulated before research begins, and which, using this fixed description, will determine the rest of the study. 'Point of departure' is to be taken literally: it is the basic assumptions you retain at the provisional end, and which, while researching, you recognize in your preferences and concepts, developed in dialogue with fields having similar or differing points of departure, selected on the basis of a vision of the completing of your own work, and finally held on to. Paradoxically put, points of departure are like terminal ports. They are the doors through which you come to your research, but through which you also finally leave it too: entrance and exit are one and the same.[14] Nevertheless, points of departure are also precursors, writers who pre-cede you and whom you as a writer will 'follow' and develop. In this way you get to know a particular research culture and you get yourself known. Precursors are a bit like the hares in a race: they get you going in the race, but the idea is ultimately to pass them and take yourself and them farther in a creative spurt towards new 'records', less in the sense of a top performance than in the combining of compatible data, which can then be considered as a new unit. While no one can go back as far as the first book, one can still claim to be a witness of a particular tradition that one has received, known, carried on, and, perhaps, surpassed.

[13] This in comparison with other attempts at a popular exposition of process thinking, such as Morgan's *Riding on the Waves of Change* or Peters' *Thriving on Chaos*.

[14] See also chapter three, fragment 10.

Fragment Four

Into the Strange World of Entrepreneurship[1]: between Academy and Alchemy

After visiting the library of organization studies, we enter the world of entrepreneurship by visiting the much younger library of this emerging discipline which studies entrepreneurial phenomena. As an academic discipline, entrepreneurship has only a short history, but entrepreneurial scholars boldly describe its rise as 'exciting', as it were itself an entrepreneurial endeavor. Firstly, we will take a closer look at the emergence of this new academic field by taking two of its main handbooks, one published in 1982, another in 1992, as anchoring points, allowing us to cover a time span of ten years, and review several articles which have in the meantime been published and which look back critically at the domain's evolution. This 'review of reviews' leads into the identification of a major dilemma within the development of the entrepreneurship-domain which will guide us to the point of departure for this dissertation. Secondly, we will formulate the implications of the meeting between both libraries for our study of entrepreneurship. I shall argue for a process view of entrepreneurship and for opening up the entrepreneurship libary, both requirements which - as this thesis intends to show - can be met by a social constructionist approach, to be outlined in chapter two.

Entrepreneurship: a Young Discipline in Search of Progress and an Identity of Its Own?

With the rise of entrepreneurial firms and the renaissance of the image of small and medium-sized firms (SME's) in general during the eighties, a period which has been named 'the entrepreneurial age,[2] entrepreneurship emerged as a new academic discipline. In 1982, Kent, Sexton and Vesper undertook a major effort to outline the state of the field in the *Encyclopedia of Entrepreneurship*, a title which suggests that the domain still had encyclopedic allure at that time. They concluded that the field was still in its infancy, and that research was for the most part in the exploratory stage and quite fragmentary. The need to develop a total

[1] After H. Mintzberg (1988).
[2] This by no one less than Ronald Reagan. His name was included under the executive forum with the title "Why This Is an Entrepreneurial Age" in the inaugural issue of the *Journal of Business Venturing*, first published in 1985 as a journal for scholars of entrepreneurship. See also Kevin Farrell of *Venture Magazine*: "*By almost any measure, the 1980's are shaping up as the most entrepreneurial decade in U.S. history.*"

and unifying framework for future research was seen as a priority. Since then, the academic field of entrepreneurship has gained momentum and attracted new scholars from multi-disciplinary backgrounds. More than ten years later, one can ask if the domain has passed the infancy stage and became more 'adult'.

How do you organize a young academic discipline?

In a short commentary within this same *Encyclopedia of Entrepreneurship*, Peterson and Horvath (1982) remark that the undertone of that book was apologetic about the state of research in the field and gave voice to a more critical view of this young discipline. Furthermore, these authors seem to me inspired in their suggestion that "*in our opinion, research on entrepreneurship is in danger of falling into the same trap.*" This trap refers to Duncan's statement that organizational theorists seem to learn more and more about less and less. One can indeed ask if entrepreneurship has fallen into this trap and become more efficient (doing things right) instead of more effective (doing the right things). The question is then not only if entrepreneurship has become more adult but also if the domain has taken Peterson and Horvath's serious warning into account, thus becoming able to engage in 'double loop learning'.

However, entrepreneurship scholars have been very self-reflective and sensitive to questioning their own domain's progress. For answering the question heading this section, we can build on several of these self-critical contributions: Sexton and Smilor, 1986b; Brockhaus, 1987; Sexton, 1988; Hisrich, 1988; Vesper, 1988; MacMillan, 1989; Stevenson and Harmeling, 1990; MacMillan and Katz, 1992.[3] Important in looking back on one's own situation, is the formulation of evaluation criteria. Especially in innovative situations - and we are considering the emergence of a new academic discipline as such - these criteria are not present, but need to be developed, and even invented or constructed during the development itself.[4] In the following review,[5] we will concentrate on this constructing of criteria, on the suggestions they infer for 'organizing' the field, and on how in general theorists are constructing the evolution of the entrepreneurship domain, considering the emergence of an entrepreneurial science as a social construction (Astley, 1985; de Laet, 1990).

[3] This list is not meant to be exhaustive. See also Cooper and Dunkelberg (1987), Brockhaus (1988), Low and MacMillan (1988), Bygrave (1989a), Amit, Glosten and Muller (1993).
[4] In chapter four, I shall describe how innovative firms create their own criteria for self-evaluation, since they are not accorded a newly built technological niche. By analogy, we suggest that it becomes critical to see both if and how entrepreneurial scholars construe their own criteria as well.
[5] An analogous review can be made of entrepreneurship education (Kao & Stevenson, 1985; Vesper, 1986; Block & Stumpf, 1992). For instance, Ivancevich (1991) tries to indicate the position of entrepreneurship education, among traditional business schools, and to discover where entrepreneurship education can go from there. Here as well, the 'choices' are in general between 'yes, entrepreneurship is teachable' and 'no, it is not', and between 'yes, entrepreneurship can belong to the traditional academic establishment' and 'no, it is far too different to fit in'. The case of education seems not to be so very different from the general research story.

In connection with the edition of *The Art and Science of Entrepreneurship*, the successor to the 1982 Encyclopedia, Sexton and Smilor (1986b) formulate the research needs and issues in entrepreneurship. According to these authors, the hopes expressed in the Encyclopedia have been for the most part realized: "*Clearly entrepreneurship has been established as a significant area of inquiry and as an academic discipline. Further, much of the cutting edge research of five years ago, now seems insignificant or passé.*" However, there is much progress still to be made, since for some parts of the domain, "*the field has advanced so rapidly that research has failed to keep pace and is still in the exploratory stage.*" Again, "*two research issues which were of paramount importance five years ago*" have remained a major concern, one of them being "*the development of a comprehensive theoretical framework.*" Although no explicit criteria are mentioned - the authors make general evaluations and discuss the 'progress for the different research subthemes which they see within the field - I would like to bracket the term 'comprehensive' as an implicit criterion.

Brockhaus (1987) sees a great deal of 'entrepreneurial folklore' - rumors and common sense - which is detrimental to the advancement of a better understanding of the entrepreneurial process. He rejects these myths in favour of studies "*that are truly comprehensive of the issue being examined.*" First of all, it seems as if Brockhaus tries to distinguish between science and common sense without giving any indication of how to draw such a demarcation between science and non-science. His statement that beliefs based on folklore are misleading remains at a superficial level since his argument is one of "*incomplete and/or incorrect information*" and of using 'strong' terms like 'truly' or 'in all fairness'.[6] At no time does he fall back on the demarcation debate in scientific philosophy,[7] or does he make any attempt to place the construction of knowledge about entrepreneurship in a broader epistemological frame of reference. As a result, Brockhaus' whole argument may best be labeled 'folkloristic'. Secondly, in Brockhaus' eyes, the solution is found in better methodology, as he suggests describing populations more fully in order to interpret generalizability, considering and controlling intervening variables, using more advanced statistical techniques, and setting up longitudinal studies. Such methodological criteria are one-sided and only refer to one kind of epistemological solution as I will show later. Finally - and here Brockhaus' message is turned around - he would have us not reject these myths so quickly and he even invites us to be intrigued by the idea of entrepreneurial folklore as a descriptive concept for entrepreneurial competences. Folklore,[8] which refers to "*the traditional customs, tales or sayings preserved orally*

[6] "In all fairness, *researchers as a group have conducted few studies that are truly comprehensive of the issue being examined*" (Brockhaus, 1987).
[7] See chapter three, and also Goossens (1991) or Stengers (1995).
[8] Brockhaus refers to folklore as "*a widely held unsupported specious notion or body of notions*" (*Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*). We try here the other definitions which are mentioned.

among a group of people", could point at the very culturally rooted customs which entrepreneurs use. Furthermore, it could be quite adequate to understand why this folklore exists at all and why it is necessary for these stories to be kept. This would not lead to something comprehensive, but make locally developed knowledge visible and accessible.[9]

According to Sexton (1988), the expansion of the entrepreneurship domain may not be doubted, but he asks a critical question: is the domain growing or is it just getting bigger? Although Sexton sees the study of the literature as a prerequisite for serious academic work, in his essay he himself only sporadically cites illustrations from the literature for building a polemically sometimes ironic - he calls research in the entrepreneurship area one of academia's best kept secrets - but highly fragmented review. In order to prevent the entrepreneurship domain from becoming second-rate research, he sees three options. Firstly, he stresses the need for high quality research of the literature, going against the tendency that the dominant literature usually cites the same authors; namely, Schumpeter, McClelland, and Collins and Moore. This requires entrepreneurial scholars to become sensitive to the adequate transmission of new developments in the basic domains[10] and their literatures. Secondly, the domain should go further than casual samples and invest in comparative research with adequate sample descriptions. Thirdly, a convergent theory should be developed. Here again convergence - like comprehensiveness and adequacy - sneaks in as a major criterion without any account of what this criterion means and of its implications for research and theory development. Although Sexton's question is fundamental and points directly to the important issue of criteria - based on quality or quantity? - his answer is vague, averse to any kind of epistemological reference, and in my view unexpectedly optimistic. How else can we interpret the phrase which concludes his essay, *"How much it will continue to grow depends upon linking the accomplishments of the past with the novelties of the present to achieve the wonders of the future?"*

It seems as if Hisrich (1988) starts from Sexton's closing phrase in formulating his title, which links the "*past, present and future of entrepreneurship.*" This scholar links the continuation of the rise of the entrepreneurial spirit to the viability and acceptance of entrepreneurship relative to other disciplines. In reviewing the articles from 1986 to 1988, the primary area of author's expertise, it emerges that specific topics may be ranked as follows: management (22%), entrepreneurship and marketing (both 10%), engineering (5%) economics, technology, corporate entrepreneurship (4%), sociology, finance, international (2%), and finally accounting and psychology (1%). Entrepreneurship seems to be viewed from a diversity of fields and

[9] In our discussion of narrative psychology, the possibilities of a folk psychology will be explored (see chapter two, fragment 7).

[10] For instance, Sexton (1988) refers to psychology, paraphrasing Carsrud: "*Psychology has much to offer to entrepreneurship research. So much that one has difficulty comprehending why we continue to utilize aspects of the psychological literature that were rejected years ago instead of using the current state-of-the-art.*"

orientations although one would have expected a better balanced set of contributions, especially in regard to Hisrich's hope to integrate "*the basic principles and tools of related academic disciplines in business, engineering, science, and the arts.*" For Hisrich this diversity looks promising for the future, but it should be answered by "*the development of a theory and theoretical framework.*" The need for theory development is a recurrent theme throughout most of these reviews.

In an editor's note MacMillan[11] (1989) tackles the problem of choosing the best forum in which entrepreneurial scholars may make their research known and publish their articles, critical necessities for acquiring promotions or tenure. The question is not only how such a forum can be defined, but more fundamentally, what 'scholarly research' is and what 'respectable publications' are. It would indeed be a good idea to see what criteria executive editors use in editing their journals. MacMillan uses an indirect approach: in outlining the forum, the editor asks nine acknowledged scholars to rate the different journals which they see as appropriate for publication on entrepreneurship. This underlines the idea in the present text that academic research and defining what is scholarly research, are matters of social construction which remain at this point somewhat between the lines.

It was Vesper (1988)[12] who then raised in a very direct and explicit way the question we are reviewing here: 'how can we tell when the field is getting somewhere?' And he is well aware of the fundamental requirement of this question not to tread the well-beaten paths, "*for a new field the question needs to be considered freshly.*" Vesper's first task is to see how precedents of progress have been considered in other academic fields like history, physics and the social sciences, which can lead to useful analogies for the entrepreneurship domain. But Vesper remains careful and tries to maintain a zone of difference. For instance in applying historical criteria, he remarks that "*taking historical lessons as future counsel can be risky; particularly, in a field like entrepreneurship where novelty is vital.*" As well, he argues that the priority of research methodology, often exaggerated in the social sciences, will ultimately not work for this domain: it is not the means that are interesting, but the range of distributions, since "*entrepreneurship is often the art of operating exceptionally.*" Vesper seems to be caught in the middle between adapting conventional criteria from others and constructing one's own, but he is not prepared to go very far: although he regrets that there is no reporting of mysteries, paradoxes, and puzzles about the subject, he refuses to draw the appropriate consequences. In drawing his illustration from the successes of some minority group start-ups, his proposal is not to go into "*philosophical ruminations about cultural differences and group values*", but "*simply to*

[11] MacMillan was at that time editor of *The Journal of Business Venturing*.

[12] Reworked version of an article which was published under the same title in the *Journal of Small Business Management*, 1987.

observe contrasting groups." Why should it be a matter of "simply"? On the one hand, Vesper is averse to research that tries "*to mystify, academicise, or even simply produce 'gee whizzes'*." Research should in the first place have a practical meaning, and I can follow this explicit criterion very well; however, while meaningful research can be simple, it should not necessarily be so. Although there is much to be said in favour of comparing contrasting groups, in my view it remains a good idea to involve at the same time a more anthropological perspective and to focus on the cultural basis of entrepreneuring, rendering it somewhat more complex. On the other hand, Vesper finds that research should go further - "*be bolder*" - than observational studies, but at the same time that it should become 'experimental': not as in the laboratory experiment, but through intervention in the field, cooperating with entrepreneurs and studying their attempts. All in all, Vesper does not seem to be satisfied with doing and looking too much like the others. Maybe it is necessary to "*trifle with established conventions*" and to "*upset established paradigms*", he suggests. The examples for illustrating what this means apply mostly to the domain of teaching entrepreneurship and they take the form of the well-known criticisms of American business schools. Vesper here presents a well-elaborated argument for alternative research voices, but misses a chance to give the paradigm tree a just as good a shaking when it comes to scientific research. Also, the very idea of 'progress' itself is not questioned. Progress, which is perhaps the most fundamental value of a traditional Western scientific and economic community, and in which entrepreneurship - entrepreneurs as the divine 'progress-makers' - plays an advanced role, has however recently been scrutinized - not to say dismantled - from a postmodernist perspective within organizational studies (Bergquist, 1993; Hassard & Parker, 1993) and other scientific disciplines (Lash, 1990; Turner, 1990) or societal discussions (Crook, Pakulski & Waters, 1992; De Wachter, 1993). Such a postmodern analysis of entrepreneurship and how this would change the premises of the entrepreneurship domain could deliver a different look at how entrepreneurship research 'proceeds'.

If Vesper does not see entrepreneurial academia as breaking with traditional approaches, Stevenson and Harmeling (1990) take their lead from Tolstoy, introducing the destructive human tendency to cling to previous conclusions as an explanation of why this inertia also exists in entrepreneurial academics. Although Stevenson and Harmeling focus on corporate entrepreneurship, the argument is very provocative for any academic audience as they outline the need for a more chaotic theory.[13] The authors introduce two models side by side, namely the change and the equilibrium models, and indicate the methodological consequences of using one of these models.[14] The equilibrium model sees entrepreneurship as a set of equilibrium-based phenomena, and tries to understand the world as it is, while the change model[15] sees change as normal. This leads to an interest in process rather than in state, or taking 'becoming' as a point of departure instead of 'being', 'entrepreneuring' instead of 'entrepreneurship'.

Stevenson and Harmeling are thus interested in where the entrepreneurship domain can go. The difference with the previous scholars is that they go beyond the actual discussion and consider the underlying frames which "*proceed from very different assumptions regarding purpose, rigor and the impact of the observer.*" Although it is suggested between the lines that entrepreneurship is more about chaotic change[16] than about fitting the idea of a static universe in which the world repeats itself, the authors do not want to make a choice between both internally consistent alternatives. While both models offer an important research challenge, exploring entrepreneurship through a change model implies a very different stance on entrepreneurship, especially in its methodological aspect. However, the main result of their analysis of the entrepreneurial domain is that the entry level for directing entrepreneurship research has been raised substantially, a paradigmatical awareness has been shown, and a respectable alternative has been formulated.

Finally, MacMillan and Katz (1992) regarding the future development of the entrepreneurship domain, suggest in their title the need for comprehensive theories. This comprehensiveness criterion runs through this review like a thread, although the approach of these authors is at second glance more fundamental as yet suggested by the plurality of theories and by their plea to build competing theories. The question of how entrepreneurship research can study multilevel processes based on "*more inclusive theories and more integrative and innovative means of data-gathering and analysis*" is answered by examining how other fields have built comprehensive theories. They find it especially interesting to approach scientific disciplines which "*have a long history of studying obscure events*", like epidemiology, paleontology, archeology, criminology and history, which are all multimethod fields. The entrepreneurship domain can profit through a process of interdisciplinary adoption, both direct and metaphorical, both in theory and method. The general aim is thus a cohesive theory of entrepreneurship, since what is "*sadly missing in entrepreneurship, are bedrock theoretical models and established empirical links between theories, idiographic fieldwork methods such as interviews and case studies, experimentation and modeling using key variables in research settings, and large-scale statistical analyses using population or large sample data.*" Theory building is one of the most pressing issues for a young science, and there are enough studies "*to begin to piece together*" our first studies.

[13] Chaos theory is accorded a great deal of attention from entrepreneurial scholars. See also Bygrave (1989b, 1993), Smilor and Feeser (1991), and Nonaka and Yamanouchi (1989).

[14] To be discussed in chapter three, fragment 11.

[15] Stevenson and Harmeling have developed this idea of the change model as a chaotic theory, taking James Gleick as a departure.

[16] The concluding lines are, however, "*Management theory needs to be built on a theory of change.*"

The fact that their conclusion is exactly the same as the one from Kent, Sexton and Vesper (1982), would suggest (without being in bad faith) that nothing fundamental has changed in the last ten years.

Let us take a closer look at this dismaying conclusion and compare it to the general review of the domain as it was presented in the *The State of the Art of Entrepreneurship* edited by Sexton and Kasarda (1992), an edition which attempts to prepare the domain for the nineties. In general it is said by Sexton and Kasarda that the domain has matured greatly, that options for more focus have been provided and that research must take responsibility towards entrepreneurs and public policy makers: as grown ups they can no longer afford playtime. They feel more secure, since "*the entrepreneurial revolution - recent though it is - is not a passing phenomenon but a permanent change in the economic landscape.*" They realize at the same time that control and prediction is in this discipline quite relative so that entrepreneurial researchers "*must, as [their] research subjects do, full immerse [themselves] in the 'flow'.*"

Churchill (1992, p. 580), too, reviewing the three handbooks[17] concludes: "*In short, in 1980 the atmosphere was one of relatively unguided exploration; in 1985 the attitude was one of excitement, proselytizing, and a few breakthroughs; and in 1990 it was optimism and a maturing awareness of the size and complexity of the subject at hand.*" In view of this complexity, "*what is now called for is more attention to constructing more fully developed theoretical frameworks for predicting, explaining cause and effect relations, and guiding empirical testing.*" Theoretical development is a continuous need but seems in Churchill's terminology more precisely defined. All the same, some scepticism should be registered here, as Churchill presents one-sided criteria (prediction, cause-effect, and testing) from a positivist paradigm, while claiming four lines before that "*the overall challenge to entrepreneurship research is understanding*", instead of explanation, as one would expect from his criteria. In the same paragraph, Churchill refers to the chapter of Aldrich dealing with the question of the kind of research norms which can be used in judging the progress of entrepreneurship. Aldrich (1992a) suggests three alternatives, a unitary, normal science view, a multiple conflicting paradigms view, and a totally pragmatic, anti-positivist view - exactly the same alternatives this sociologist and outsider to the entrepreneurship domain has proposed for organisation theory (Aldrich, 1992b). Churchill's proposal for prediction fits only the first paradigm and there are suggestions to change the criteria according to Aldrich's multi-perspectivistic proposal. In my view, the 1992 handbook illustrates single-loop learning more richly than double-loop learning within the entrepreneurial academic discipline, since a shift in norms is rarely noticeable, pleaded for or

[17] These are: *Encyclopedia of Entrepreneurship*, *The Art and Science of Entrepreneurship*, and *The State of the Art of Entrepreneurship*.

applied, and since the increase of paradigmatic and epistemological awareness is rather moderate. There are, however, still more reasons to temper the optimism for the nineties.

The exciting rise of entrepreneurship research: a major dilemma...

In the short review above, more and more voices are heard demanding that entrepreneurship become a serious academic discipline and transcend the exploratory stage. The vocabulary used, in which we can discover some major questions with which the domain is wrestling, sounds like the development of a theoretical framework, with its urge for unification and comprehensiveness and its need for predictive analysis, but this felt need to become a straight and classic academic discipline, comparable in level to other disciplinary domains (in the meantime realized, as evidenced by its having become a full division of the '*Academy of Management*'), is only one part of the story of the last ten years.

On the other hand, entrepreneurship scholars are not modest at all in stressing the very different, unique and special character of their object and domain. Especially stressed is the excitement which is involved in the start-up of this new domain. The analogy between domain and its object is not incidental. Sexton and Smilor (1986b) formulate it as "*the interest and excitement in academe with regard to entrepreneurship.*" Entrepreneurship and researching entrepreneurship are "*equally interesting, exciting and challenging.*" Hisrich (1988) calls it the entrepreneurship 'craze'. One of the most expressive and excessive formulations of this kind comes from Peterson and Horvath (1982), who compare entrepreneurship students with alchemists. For them, entrepreneurship as a young academic discipline resembles its own research object: "*These are people who identify with entrepreneurship emotionally, since they are academic entrepreneurs themselves. They are launching a new field of study; they feel a missionary zeal to impart what knowledge there is to their students, to battle bureaucrats who block any departure from academic orthodoxy, to raise research funds for programs in this underdeveloped field. What should be said is that students of entrepreneurship are like the alchemists, trying to explain complex phenomena with four blunt variables: fire, water, earth, and air*" (Peterson & Horvath, 1982). This 'otherness' is reflected in the discussion of how entrepreneurship should be defined (see fragment 1) and on what the entrepreneurship domain is studying. MacMillan and Katz (1992) use the term 'idiosyncratic milieus' for indicating that events and persons - in our case the entrepreneurial event/person - are difficult to find and are obscured. They have even developed a model of obscurity which tries to explain why an entrepreneurial event is hard to analyse. One can not deny that naming one's own domain as 'obscured' is strong language, which will not be used easily in more traditional fields. The search for adventure through research has not decreased with the years, as illustrated by Aldrich (1992a, p. 191): "*People who study entrepreneurship*

exhibit a certain sort of madness in their passion for the subject. This zest for the substance of entrepreneurship is what makes the field so attractive to many of us who are refugees from other, more boring fields." This "otherness" is also reflected when dealing with future methodological choices. Although suggestions and arguments are formulated along the lines of classical disciplines, some authors shrink from doing this due to entrepreneurship's being 'special'. For instance, Hisrich (1988) does not see a possible solution in the choice for predictive cause and effect relationships: "*By its very nature, success in the field of entrepreneurship reflects changing internal and external environments. It is doubtful, therefore, that a formal predictive scientific theory of entrepreneurship will ever emerge.*" Hisrich, too, shows a preference for the prediction alternative - nothing new here - but this contradicts the very 'nature' of entrepreneurship.

In summary, the domain of entrepreneurship is a recent academic discipline which is growing rapidly. A major *dilemma* characterizes its development as sketched through the main reviews of the last decade: the urge to become a straight and classic academic discipline on the one hand and the celebration of the excitement and general difference of the field and the need to create an identity of its own on the other. Within the field's evolution, the nervous search for progress versus the patient creation of an identity of its own is a sharp tension which may be be interpreted from the articulations and suggestions by entrepreneurial scholars on the future outline of the field. This dilemma should not remain hidden but should be taken into account when discussing the possible futures of the domain.

A Meeting between Two Libraries: Implications

The challenge the entrepreneurship discipline is facing of as it attempts to deal constructively with the above dilemma, is to find more definite orientations without loosing its potential for an innovative approach to its innovative themes. From the exploration of both libraries, I would like to suggest two orientations which can meet these expectations. A first orientation is to develop and outline process studies of entrepreneurship. A second orientation is to open up the entrepreneurial library, engaging in a dialogue with texts on ontological, epistemological, and methodological issues of knowledge creation. Although other orientations can be formulated, the suggested positions are important if the entrepreneurship discipline is to do justice to its 'special object' and it is in my view necessary to take such positions in order to be able to answer the research questions of this study which focus as they do on the 'impossible' organizing task of the collective continuation of the initial innovative potential.

Towards a process study of entrepreneurship: entrepreneuring

In exploring the organization library, a process view of reality and of organizing was proposed as an useful direction within organizational research, more able to address a changing and highly dynamic reality than static and equilibrium-focused models can. Entrepreneurship, according to the above-mentioned views of the entrepreneurial scholars and to our definitions (see fragment 1), applies particularly well to such a 'flux'-context. Therefore, a process view of entrepreneurship will be developed in this study. Such process studies have recently been advocated in the entrepreneurship field (Bhave, 1994; Gartner, 1985; Johannisson, 1991; Nonaka & Yamanouchi, 1989; Stevenson & Harmeling, 1990), as summarized by Van de Ven (1992, p. 216): "*In short, the entrepreneur needs a process theory to explain innovation development.*"

According to Van de Ven (1992, p. 218), a process theory following a Schumpeter's view on entrepreneurship, should include statements that approach innovation "*(1) as a dynamic evolutionary process, (2) in which many actors (including entrepreneurs) undertake time-dependent sequences of activities and events, (3) which produce cycles of discontinuity (punctuated disequilibria) and continuity (convergent equilibria), and that (4) both create and are constrained by different hierarchical levels of the social system.*" However, very few of the process models of entrepreneurship can meet these requirements fully. One of the earliest models, a conceptual framework for describing the phenomenon of new venture creation by Gartner (1985), and highly appreciated in the domain (Bird, 1989; Kuratko & Hodgetts, 1990), can guide as an example. This framework combines four variables into a multi-dimensional model, 'a gestalt of variables from the four dimensions'; namely "*(1) individual(s) - the person starting a new organization; (2) organization - the kind of firm that is started; (3) environment - the situation surrounding and influencing the new organization; and (4) new venture process - the actions undertaken by the individual(s) to start the venture*" (p. 698). From this model it becomes clear that the process is isolated as a 'variable' separated from the actors, their context and the organizational outcomes. I believe that a full process theory would consist of one process, transcending the distinction between micro (e.g. the entrepreneur) and macro-models of entrepreneurship (e.g. the environment), and becoming a meso-approach where interactions are described in their socio-cultural context.

In order to concretize this process, I am suggesting the use of process language, dilemmas, and events, as seen in our exploration of the flux-metaphor in fragment 3, and as recently voiced in different parts of entrepreneurship literature. Firstly, the use of process language would imply a description of the entrepreneurial phenomenon in terms of verbs, such as 'entrepreneuring'. The similar idea of using an organizational emergence vocabulary has been put forward by Gartner[18] (1993), using the motto that 'words lead to deeds'. His idea is that

the words we use to talk about entrepreneurship influence our ability to think about this phenomenon, and our subsequent research. The list of words he proposes consists of: being, circumstance, emerge, emergence, emergency, emergent evolution, equivocal, found, founder, genesis, and variation. Although I have nothing against this attempt, I think two remarks do need to be made. Firstly, the use of process language goes further than just changing your vocabulary; it requires a theory of language, as we shall see in the exploration of social constructionism in chapter two. There, it will be claimed that 'words are deeds'. Secondly, I think it is appropriate to point out that Gartner's conception of emergence as the 'interaction of being and circumstance' is far from being a process view as outlined through the flux metaphor. Is it a coincidence that the word *becoming* is not part of Gartner's list?

A second way to concretize a process view and to approach the idea of a dynamic process is by describing entrepreneurship in terms of dilemmas. The context of high techs, characterized by technological complexity, environmental dependency, and economic uncertainty, seems appropriate for a dilemmatic vocabulary and conceptualization. Describing entrepreneurship in terms of dilemmas has been undertaken recently by Jarillo (1989) concerning the use of external resources, by Dees and Starr (1992) concerning ethical issues faced by entrepreneurs, and by Dyer (1992) concerning the entrepreneurial career. Although they come to important conclusions on the kind of dilemmas entrepreneurs face, little is said about the nature itself of dilemmas and their relation to the entrepreneurial process.[19] It should be kept in mind that this dilemmatic approach to entrepreneurship joins an emerging tradition of organizational analysis as a process of dealing with dilemmas, paradoxes and dualities, as documented in fragment 3.

A third way, focusing on events in the stream of reality, has been followed in studies of entrepreneurship by Bygrave (1989a, 1989b, 1993), Kuratko and Hodgetts (1990), and Bird (1989). Bygrave (1993) takes the entrepreneurial event as central in studying entrepreneurship. The entrepreneurial event involves the creation of a new organization to pursue an opportunity, and it is characterized as follows: it is initiated by an act of human volition, it is at the level of the individual firm, it is a change of state, it is a discontinuity, it is a holistic and dynamic process, it involves numerous antecedent variables, its outcomes are extremely sensitive to initial conditions, and it is unique (Bygrave, 1993, p. 257-258). Entrepreneurial events occur within a larger context, a framework of events, circumstances, situations, settings and niches (Bird, 1989). Recently, Gersick (1994) found that a new venture was regulating its time progress not only on the basis of temporal pacing (using temporal milestones), but, to her surprise, also through event-based triggers for action: actions were initiated only when the right event had occurred. In this study, entrepreneurship is seen as a consecution of events and interactions, short-lived appearances in Weickian terms, around which interpretations and actions are organized.

[18] This is the same Gartner whose conceptual framework we cited above (Gartner, 1985). However, in this article, he acknowledges that he is gravitating "*towards a social constructionist view*" (Gartner, 1993, p. 234).
[19] This point will be elaborated in chapter four.

Opening the entrepreneurship library

Although important scholars have reviewed the domain critically, as illustrated by this review of reviews, I think a more thorough analysis of the domain is still needed. In the reviews, I note too little reference to a more fundamental questioning of the ontological, paradigmatical, and methodological grounds of the field and too much referring to other domains. The oft-mentioned excitement of its authors due to its novelty and innovativeness, can be questionmarked: is its rise really as exciting as claimed? We may indeed question whether this domain is as innovative as it pretends to be. Conspicuously absent are arguments which take more seriously the idea of developing a scientific discipline with its own characteristics, which is as innovative as its 'object' of study and abreast of most new developments. Important suggestions and openings have been formulated by among others Stevenson and Harmeling and Macmillan and Katz respectively in their idea of chaos theory and idiosyncratic milieus. Still, problem formulations and research themes in the entrepreneurship library are mainly approached in functionalist terms, while the possiblities of a more interpretive, radical humanist and radical structuralist orientation remain unused (Bygrave, 1989; Johannisson 1991, 1992; Bouwen & Steyaert, 1992). Actually, arguing in favour of a process view of entrepreneurship implies an approach which rests on interpretive as well as radical humanist insights and frameworks.[20] This doctoral thesis aims to relate itself to the more fundamental questions and problems with which the domain of entrepreneurship is wrestling, and is intended to steer the field into another possible option, another opening, which looks at entrepreneurship from a social constructionist perspective. In developing this perspective - in chapter two - we shall focus on social constructionist orientations which promise help in understanding our research theme and to give an answer to our research questions.

Taking a social constructionist view of entrepreneurship requires a definition of the entrepreneurship process in such a vocabulary. Czarniawska-Joerges and Wolff (1991, p. 534) have paraphrased Schumpeter's ideas in social constructionist terms, stating that "*entrepreneurs are people who are the first to see a crack or a flaw in a social construction of economic reality, and to interpret it as an opportunity to actualize their ideas of what the world should look like.*" This definition focuses more on the persons involved in entrepreneurial activities than on the entrepreneurial *process* per se. If, in this study, we follow Schumpeter's view on entrepreneurship,

[20] A functionalist way of process thinking searches for the underlying logic that explains a causal relationship between independent and dependent variables.

simultaneously stressing the creative essence, entrepreneurship becomes involved with the process of creating a new social reality through taking initiative and making new contexts which cannot be dealt with by means of routines and habits. Entrepreneurship is about creating new contexts as if the existing ones did not exist. Both Czarniawska-Joerges and Wolff also stress the social nature of entrepreneurship; they see entrepreneurs, the makers of our worlds, as those who succeed in finding social confirmation of their vision. On the other hand, "*as long as this vision is not shared by others, they have to live with an individually constructed reality, which is a heavy burden to bear. What seem to be anecdotal stories of mad inventors and innovators might be actually quite true, in the sense that the unsuccessful inventors are people whose reality did not become socially confirmed*" (p. 534). The question which remains open is *how this process of social sharing and confirming can be understood and conceptually and empiricallly documented*; this is the question we are attempting to answer throughout this text. In the next chapter, we shall try to conceptualize the social constructionist approach more precisely, in order to refine our social constructionist conception of the entrepreneurial process.

The entrepreneur on the proscenium

To conclude this meeting of two libraries, which was set up to anchor theoretically our problem formulation, and as a transition to our answer, a first glimpse of the entrepreneurial phenomenon will be shown, in line with the fourth device of defining which gives a qualitative definition of entrepreneurship. The idea of the performance is suggested by Czarniawska-Joerges and Wolff (1991, p. 539-540) who present the entrepreneur on the organizational stage under the title "*Why Are Entrepreneurs Admired and Feared?*", comparing him or her with the manager and the leader:

> *Entrepreneurs represent an everyday's dream of the successful life. They are Columbuses, and treasure-hunters all in one. Their task is to create new worlds, often with a mainly pecuniary interest in the background. In a sense, their play is most often a tragedy, while leaders come from a drama and managers from a situation comedy. They might become Macbeths if things go wrong, but also inventors like Faust, who wanted to be immortal and succeeded - indeed, it depends on very individual moral judgement as to whether we see Faust as a failure or as a total success. When successful, entrepreneurs acquire God-like (or Satan-like) properties in eyes of the rest of the people: those who can create worlds are to be both worshipped and feared:*
>
> *'In the beginning was meaning -*
> *In the beginning was action'.*
>
> (*Faust*, Goethe).

Hence, we shall not simply put the spotlight on the entrepreneur alone, as this would simultaneously obscure the complex social context of entrepreneurial performance. Thus a view of the entrepreneur on the proscenium cannot suffice; we need to open the curtains, and take a look into the wings as the full entrepreneurial tragedy unfolds. Entrepreneurship is to be understood by being viewed on the complete stage, which includes its social cultural context. Open the curtains!