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WHEN THE PRACTICE OF THEORIZING MEETS THE THEORIZING OF PRACTICE. SOIAL KNOWLEDGE MAKING IN ORGANIZATION SCIENCE ACADEMIA AND MANAGERIAL COMMUNITIES

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"Man is a mystery. It needs to be unravelled, and if you spend your whole life unravelling it, don't say that you've wasted time. I am studying that mystery because I want to be a human being." — Fyodor Dostoyevsky

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The Theory-Practice Relation in the Social World

Our society is divided into castes based upon a supposed division between theoretical knowledge and practical skill. Let's take the following prototypical vignettes. The academic professor is she who writes things no one can understand, reads books no one ever reads and gives public lectures of which no one can grasp the real meaning, not to mention the worldly applicability. No one save for her academic peers, of course. "I want to argue that…" resounds incessantly, insistently, annoyingly in the social world, but most times few see signs of real arguments or have sufficient time and interest to decipher academic riddles in search of 'true' meaning. Yet academia proliferates -by its own internal mechanisms, some say- and one after another, arguments which are useful to few and doubtful, incomprehensive or simply uninteresting to most- pile up to contribute to the knowledge of human kind. By contrast, the practitioner is usually pictured as she who swarms incessantly in the webs of day to day chores, doing things no one knows better and, for that matter, which no one is interested to do or know *just as well* or *in the same way*. "I know what I am talking about because I do it every day…" resounds incessantly, insistently, annoyingly, and usually just few- if any- manifest sufficient time and interest to replicate practitioners' riddles or to argue against them. Indeed, no one knows it better than the one who does things every day and no one could do it better than her, perhaps not even her own practice peers. So the practice world proliferates –by its own internal mechanisms, some say- and one day after another a new practice, that many don't understand, few will ever practice and only some will consider valuable, adds to the many practices of the human kind. In the very same moment in which this happens, another stereotypical vignette commonly intersects the previous two. The academic and the practitioner stand now face to face

and look at each other with astonishment. While the academic holds forth on television, in classrooms and through thick specialized books about 'the necessity of embracing a progressive, more conscious vision of where the world is heading to', the latter fumes about detached ivory tower intellectuals and secretly coves her own truth about 'how much more complex and simple, painful and interesting at the same time real life is'. They just *don't see it* the same way.

The felt distinction between the academic professor and the practitioner as reflected in these vignettes is nothing uncommon for most of us. It is reflected in how we think about our own minds and about our capacities. Humans are thinkers, and humans are doers. There is a natural temptation to view these activities as requiring distinct capacities. When we *reflect*, we are guided by our knowledge of truths about the world. By contrast, when we *act*, we are guided by our knowledge of how to perform various actions. If these are distinct cognitive capacities, then there is a distinction between practical and theoretical knowledge. In turn, it is just as common to see that distinct cognitive capacities or different behavioural patterns are embodied differently in the social world, so that knowing is the attribution of the scientist and doing is that of the common practitioner (Golinksi, 2005, Stanley, 2005). Therefore, the world of the academic professor is supposedly so different from the world of the practitioner because they are viewed as employing fundamentally different knowing-doing strategies. The academic professor doesn't "get it," because her knowledge is purely theoretical, knowledge of truths. It cannot understand the subtleties and irregularities of daily practice. The practitioner instead isn't qualified to reason about a political system or the economy, nor can he make sensed contributions to understanding abstract institutional arrangements or the multiplication of organizational forms, because skill in complex action doesn't equal complex knowledge. Action and knowledge are both complex but that doesn't make them similar, nor can they be the competence of the same men.

The cliché of the learned professor inept in practical tasks is just as familiar as that of the dumb jock and its variations can be found throughout the worlds of organizations and

organization science as well as in many other spheres of the social world, from physics and literature to gastronomy and football (Irwin and Michael, 2003). While this debate can be thus applied to some extent to many domains, this dissertation will be concerned with discussing the theory-practice relation debate as reflected in the field of management and more in general in organization science.

Particularly, there is a strong debate in the field of organization science (OS) about how useful/relevant OS theories developed by academics can be for those who practice management within organizations. Most debates reiterate in a critic and systematic manner the clichés of the learned professor and the skilful jock, yet by creating manifold versions, some of which confuse, contradict of partially overlap. For instance, some have associated theory with wisdom, the capacity of men to transcend their own limits and contemplate things which are beautiful, first, pure and eternal. From such perspective, theory is worthy of its name just as long as it is decoupled from practice and rises 'above it'. Practice, instead, has often been associated with action, such as accomplishing, managing, doing, performing, transforming. If theory is a way to transcend the self, practice is a way of bringing the world towards self and internalize it.

The most problematic and contradictory aspects however are not defining theory nor defining practice, but defining the relation between them. For instance, except for some contributions which have argued that theory and practice are irreconcilable social worlds with different mental categories and abilities between which no logical transition or comparison can be performed, it is common agreement that theory and practice can and should be related in the social world and that the man can progress only by drawing on both and combining them. Yet less agreement is reached about how this actually occurs or about how it should ideally be fostered by our initiatives. For instance, some have argued that scientific knowledge is assimilated in the form of pure, abstract ideas that should gradually diffuse within the society under the diligence of academics. Practitioners should look for theories in order to be able to rise above particularities of day to day situations and find new solutions which could bring

transcendence. Others instead have showed doubts about the possibility to automatically put theories into practice and have suggested that academics and practitioners should try to collaborate in order to find a way in which to make things work. Others instead have argued that it is only practice that can inform practice, and not scientific theory which is an external outcome of somebody's existing practices. Therefore, from one perspective, practice is the derivative of theory, its behavioural extension. From another perspective, theory is the derivative of practice, the rationalizing gloss laying upon it (Barnes et al, 1996, Bloor, 1991, Shapin, 1982). Others yet have enlarged the discussion and considered that both academics and practitioners practice and theorize, although few agreements have been reached about the way in which theories and practices of academics might be connected, similar, different, benefic or detrimental with respect to the theories and practices of practitioners.

The arguments have been manifold and have lured at the same time the seduction of prescription and the uncertainties of future actions. Many of their implicit assumptions are patchy, partially overlapping, blurry and confusing and, most importantly, they give few information about what happens in the social world and how theory and practice are embodied by individuals, groups and communities, in which ways, through which mechanisms of exchange or segregation or with what social, political, historical and cultural purposes, functions or consequences.

This dissertation is an attempt to contribute to the theory-practice debate in the field of organization science in particular and to the broader social debate about the relation between theory and practice in general. It aims to increase clarity and bring systematization in the theory-practice debate and to provide a new, integrating way of looking at the theory-practice relation, that inherently draws on sociology. It is a situated, social-material, relational and interactionist inquiry that intends to advance the theory-practice argument by means of theoretical systematization, conceptual integration and empirical investigation.

On Paradox, Dichotomies and a New Research Idea

The idea of the study came as a reaction and at the same time as a curiosity with respect to the clichés about the academic expert and the skilful practitioner which, as shown earlier, picture theory and practice as different knowing-doing strategies that pertain to different social worlds between which exchanges are full of obstacles. In particular, it seemed puzzling to me that the theory-practice relation is so strongly characterized by dichotomies, antinomies and cultural dualisms. In order to define practice, people have traced its boundaries in opposition to the ones of theory. In order to define theory, people have opposed it to the characteristics of practice. This way, theory has been seen as a prerogative of the scientific mode which is rational, principled, impartial, consistent, non-arbitrary, closed, systematic and analytical while practice has been seen as the prerogative of the social world in general which is non-scientific, local, commonsensical, holistic, inclusive, experiential, historical, open and non-systematic (Agrawal,1995, Lakatos, 1970, Kuhn, 1970, Shapin, 1982). Depending on the perspective, superiority has been attributed to science or to practice, according to one's preferences and purposes at hand (Toulmin 1982). However, there is few understanding about why theory and practice must necessarily be about one or the other and about why they cannot be a bit of both. Even more importantly, *if they are a bit of both*, then the highest challenge would be that of understanding *how* this occurs. The problem with dichotomies in the science-practice debate is that they have frequently divided the world into halves, so that each contribution positions in harmony with one half and in complete contrast to the other, while each additional step implies a slippage from one pole to the other and then the other way around. As a consequence, most contributions have treated either practice or theory as fixed, but few have actually been able to look at the same time at the variations and dynamics of both and to consider the interests, knowledge and practices of those who have created and constantly alimented and/or legitimated the theory-practice distinction.

This dissertation tried to make a step forward. It aimed to understand some of the most recurrent dichotomies (eg knowledge versus action, the local versus the abstract, the scientific versus the non-scientific) and to integrate them in such way that theory and practice may no longer be considered as segregated or opposed, but as inherently interrelated. This way, the relations between academics and practitioners, between knowledge and action or between science and commonsense become reconceptualized in terms of loosely coupled social-material configurations of knowledge and practices that individuals -be they scientists, practitioners, or any other kind of social actors- enact during their day to day lives in order to serve their purposes at hand.

Furthermore, the research strongly questions the principle of separatedness or the 'gap perspective' that has dominated most debates in the field of organization science. From such perspective, theory is decoupled from practice, either because academics do not care or do not manage to inform practitioners or because practitioners do not care or do not manage to draw inspiration from academic theories. Instead the studies which compose this dissertation argue quite the opposite. Theory and practice are always interrelated, but they are so in a loosely coupled manner that is different from the tightly coupled, causal, prescriptive and programmatic way in which we usually think about it. To bring theory and practice together, no special measures must be taken. Academics shouldn't become more practical in the same way in which practitioners shouldn't get more philosophical. Education shouldn't necessarily be more dynamic, entertaining or critical while books shouldn't necessarily be shorter or longer, more 'interesting' 'pragmatic' or 'rigorous', although it doesn't even mean they should remain the way they are. Interest, usefulness and intentions cannot be determined *in abstracto*. They lie in between social exchanges and it is there we should look for the relevance and usefulness of theory to practice instead of outside of it. This means that theory-practice exchanges occur every day, even in the most mundane exchanges in the human world and it is only by studying these situated, contextualized places of encounter that we can then abstract about theory-practice

recurrent patterns of relation, emerging configurations and manifestations. It is only by grasping the micro-mechanisms of social exchanges that we can say something about the macro argument of how theory usually relates to practice and it is only through the study of patterned intersubjectivity that we can know what to expect from different types of exchanges that frequently go on in the social world (Cicourel and Knorr-Cetina, 1981, Collins,1981, Goffman,1959, 1961, Knorr-Cetina,1983, Toulmin, 1992).

A Plain Example

I will try to provide an elucidating example. As I am writing these lines and by the time you will be reading them, each of us will have been performing and reflecting, knowing and doing, abstractizing and contextualizing, as we move from one site to another, from one exchange to the next one across multiple networks of people, things, practices, ideas to which we participate. As I write these very lines, I connect to my own past experiences, my goals, values, interests, as I start thinking about the new task I must perform. I think about you, future readers, and try to connect myself to you as much as I can. I realize I am writing this piece for you as much as I am writing it for myself. I am more aware of myself than I am about you but in order to proceed with my project I cannot do other but address myself to you. Time after time, my imagination hypothesizes many people reading these lines and making value judgments about their meaning and about their author. Relators, supervisors, reviewers, evaluators, friends, colleagues, I intuitively associate each of you with different interests, preferences, knowledge backgrounds and purposes at hand. I feel I should write differently for each of you, and at the same time I am unable to. I am constrained by time, space, technical equipment and social conventions, so I try to do it *my way*. I retrospectively think about the knowledge I have accumulated so far and extract pieces of the research I have conducted, the data I have analyzed and the pieces of formal text that I have previously written. I select some of the main findings, I twist and turn what I already know and try to make it suitable for this occasion. I reformulate, change order of topics, use a different tone, hoping that at least some of you will appreciate my efforts (at least

those of you who in this moment are more important or salient to me). I am trying to 'get things right'. I think about the style and genre that I am expected to produce and try to comply as much as I can, yet remaining faithful to my own approach. I use a computer, browse a printed copy of the dissertation as well as their electronic versions. I try to write this new piece the best I can, according to how technology and previous pieces of writing enable me and constrain me to do. I try to anticipate your reactions. I try to persuade you that my intentions are *good* and that this piece is *worthy* to be read, *interesting* and *useful*. In other words, I am practicing and theorizing; I am transmitting abstract ideas through material means and I am using in my abstract speech concrete references, indexicalities and examples that allow me to contextualize and argument my point of view. I am using scientific knowledge –that is, the knowledge that I have accumulated by reading academic literatures in various fields, from organization theory, sociologies of knowledge, sociology of science, actor-network-theory, symbolic interactionism- and, at the same time, I am drawing on commonsensical knowledge, that is the knowledge I have about the social world I inhabit, about the people I know, about the practices and norms I am aware of, and so on. I am performing and, at the same time, transmitting values, rules and abstract ideologies that belong both to the lay and the scientific spheres. I am theorizing about the theory-practice relation, but I am theorizing to you. Probably I am writing this piece today in a different manner than I would have done tomorrow, after having read a new article, after having had a talk with any of you or simply after having additionally reflected about these issues on my own. In other words, I am theorizing and practicing and I am operating continuous transformations both on myself, on my work, on previous bodies of knowledge and practices and on you. No matter how much I tried to understand the effect that my theory will have on your thoughts and on your practices, my anticipations always remain limited and unfaithful to your true reactions. You will first of all read these lines according to your purposes at hand: evaluation, legitimation, intellectual delectation, curiosity as well as any combination of these. You will interpret my ideas according to previous knowledge, experiences, interests and you

will ‘turn them into practice’ according to requirements of the actors, norms, social conventions to which you are tied. If you need to evaluate me, you will probably focus mainly on evaluation, you will apply those tools and rules that you are used to connect to the category ‘evaluation’. If you are reading for curiosity, you will probably focus on what first brought you to read these lines, but it is highly likely that while you read you will do both and even much more. In trying to understand my arguments you will be trying to put yourself in my shoes; in being able to continue with your own purposes, you will step out of my shoes and back into yours. However, with or without your personal awareness, you will have been transformed. It doesn’t necessarily mean you will have been transformed forever, and that my words will linger into you incessantly. Many other experiences might wash away the memory of this reading. But it is most likely that a provisional contagion between us has already occurred and that we will take this contagion forward into exchanges in which both you and I are engaged. While performing some other activities, no matter how vicarious, you will remember some of my arguments and will feel tempted to test them. You might do so in your mind, through reflection, or you might do so during interaction with other people. You might be tempted just to see if it’s *true* or if it actually *works*, but each time you will do any of that, you will be inserting me in the relations to which you participate and this way, you will bring change to yourself and to your world, through yourself directly and through me indirectly. In other words, you and I will be participating to advancing human knowledge and to revising human practices, we will become a tie within a multitude of ties that already connect theory and practice, the academia and the practice world, the scientific and the commonsensical.

This long digression was aimed to explain with plain words the very core of the present dissertation, its main findings and the contributions it aims at. The work is organized in two parts and presents as a collection of two papers, each of them inquiring from different yet complementary perspective about the theory-practice relation in the field of organization science, as follows.

Structure of the Work: Research Papers, Assumptions, Main Findings, Contributions

The first paper is entitled "From Gaps to Tangles. The Theory-Practice Debate in Organization Studies. State of the Field and Possible Directions**"**. It is a theoretical contribution aimed at systematizing the fragmented, at times contradictory, literature in organization science about the theory-practice relation. It also aims to propose a renewed perspective on the theory-practice relation while drawing on some of the limitations and contradictions of the reviewed literature. The paper struggles to identify the regularities, inconsistencies, implicit assumptions and limitations of the manifold contributions that have tackled the relation between organization theory and management practice. Through analytic systematization, pre-existing literature is clustered according to three main aspects identified as salient across analyzed papers: (1) nature of theory and practice: how theory and practice are positioned with respect to a series of frequently mentioned categories such as knowledge and action, the scientific and the commonsensical, the abstract and the local; (2) the social, cultural and historical contextualization of the theory-practice relation: the actors, communities, spaces that are mentioned when talking about OS theory and managerial practice; (3) the type of relationship that is said to establish between the two: how theory and practice might be similar, different, connected or disconnected in the real world. Basing on the three identified criteria a broad distinction has been introduced between the *transfer argument*, generally concerned with how theory can be put into practical activity, and the *construction argument*, questioning the ways in which theory and practice are produced, embodied and co-exist in the real world. Additionally, each of the two arguments is articulated in a set of sub-arguments or positions which deal with the theory-practice relation in relatively different, often contrasting ways. It is suggested that the theory-practice debate is founded on a set of recurrent dichotomies, such as academics versus practitioners, action versus knowledge, the scientific versus the non-scientific, that prevent the debate from moving forward. The study shows that dichotomies appear as open-ended, symbolical, tautological and ontologically impossible to sustain. By going beyond the logics of

contrast, the theoretical paper hopes to contribute to the renewal of the theory-practice argument by means of reconciliation and integration.

Drawing on contributions in philosophy of science and sociology of science and on some contributions coming from organization scholarship, I delineate a new position called entwinement that is socially situated, practice-based, pragmatic and relational. From the entwinement perspective, theory and practice constitute as a circular iterative process of action and cognition, science and common-sense enacted in the real world both by organization scholars and practitioners according to purposes at hand.

The paper brings a series of original contributions. First of all, it is the first elaborate review of the theory-practice relation as seen in Organization Science. While most reviewed contributions focus either on theory or on practice or try to propose a series of suggestions and directions about how to bridge the theory-practice gap, the present paper focuses equally on theory and on practice and looks specifically at the relation between them. This has allowed to identify different streams of literature in which past contributions may be clustered (for the transfer argument, the correspondent and the concordant positions; for the construction argument, the incommensurable and the equivalent positions), which have not been previously mentioned in other works. Additionally, the study provides an original discussion of the dichotomies that have pervaded the debate, of their assumptions and limitation, this too being, up to my knowledge, something which has not been done before. Furthermore, the paper ends with the proposal of a renewed research agenda based on the entwinement perspective and with a discussion of how the entwinement perspective may affect (both positively and negatively) the way we see our field and our scholarly work. By proposing integration, the study hopes to bring transcendence. By making visible those aspects, implicit arguments, dichotomies, strengths and limitations that have mostly characterized the theory-practice debate, it aims to help researchers design studies that will lead to more comprehensive theories of the relationship between OS theory and management practice.

The second paper is entitled, “When the Practice of Theorizing Meets the Theorizing of Practice. Social Knowledge Making in Organization Science Academia and Managerial Communities”, and it is the core part of the dissertation. It is complementary to the first paper insofar as it continues and integrates the debate with an empirical study that aims to investigate the relation between theory and practice as manifested in the real world within a social encounter between organization science academics and management practitioners.

I have inserted my research into an on-going discussion from the field to which I feel I could make a strong contribution. As I try to show extensively also in the first paper, there is a strong debate in the OS field about how useful/relevant OS theories developed by academics can be for those who practice management within organizations in their daily lives. In the first part of the work, I try to show how most contributions have complained about the existence of a theory-practice gap in the OS field and how they have attributed the gap to the lack of relevance that scholar theories had for the needs and interests of management practitioners. I also show that the lack of relevance in turn was attributed to those centripetal forces that determine academics to focus on internal mechanisms of the academic field (professional interests, institutionalized careers and publication mechanisms, etc) and prevent them from directing centrifugal forces to the establishment of durable and meaningful connections with actors and communities outside academia, such as the practitioners. In few words, of the blame for the theory-practice gap has been attributed to the fact that academics and practitioners live in two separate worlds and many suggestions have been made about how to bridge these different worlds.

The paper tries to prove this perspective wrong by bringing evidence from a mundane interaction situation between academics and practitioners. It is the ethnographic study of an encounter between two groups of expert academics and practitioners occasioned by a one-year executive business master concerning the topic of management of technological innovation. Through the analysis of a mixture of participant observation, semi-structured interviews,

documents and behavioural recordings, and through the recurrent back and forth between data and different literatures (such as interaction symbolism and actor-network theory), a grounded theory was developed in order to show what happens when academics and practitioners meet in a given space and time and to describe to which extent their theories and practices are different or similar, how they influence each other or remain distinct throughout the course of interaction. The findings articulate a process view of the knowledge exchanges between academics and practitioners and emphasize that even their most mundane exchanges are dynamic, relational and transformative.

In line with some other contributions which have described the world of practice as a fragmented field of heterogeneous practices and relations and in line with those contributions which have described academia as a patchy, multiple-paradigmatic community of practice, I show that the exchanges between academics and practitioners are generative and transformational precisely because academics and practitioners are connected within and between their communities of practice by multiple, fragile, continuously changing webs of relations.

When academics and practitioners meet, they enact a series of psycho-social strategies of interaction through which they make sense of their own worlds and through which they try simultaneously to give some sense to the others, according to their purposes at hand. This way, the classroom becomes a liminal space where academics and practitioners constantly negotiate their ex-situ knowledge and practices (eg the knowldge they already have outside the classroom) and the in-situ knowledge and practices (the common framework that they developed in classroom interaction). The interaction mechanisms between academics and practitioners are pretty much similar to those that I described in the example about my writing and about the reading that others will have of my work. Since academics and practitioners knew each other few, they initially presented themselves in ways that would have suited the others. In the same way, they tried to attribute to others a set stereotypical characteristics that would have

suited themselves. By doing this, academics and practitioners tried to build a common framework (in-situ relations) which would enable communication during the master despite differences and information shortage. However soon after having set up the first bricks of the common framework, each of them acted and reacted in dynamic ways. They refused stereotypes attributed by others and invited them to try and know them better. In time, academics and practitioners increasingly involved in-situ, as they tried to show a less-stereotypical versions of themselves or as they tried to de-stereotype the others, upon their invitations. This way, while building in-situ relations they were bringing in also ex-situ relations under the form of their most frequent experiences (eg, they were describing themselves and the others by drawing on pieces of knowledge and practices developed elsewhere, such as on the job, in their personal lives, etc). In the same way, when they went outside and enacted ex-situ relations, they started drawing also on in-situ relations (eg, they reminded of conversations they had in the master classroom and put it to test in their day to day worlds). This way, both academics and practitioners managed to embrace change. In particular, the in-situ and the ex-situ, the knowledge and practices of selves and the ones of others were mediated through the enactment of *provisional relations*.

By engaging in multiple provisional relations in classroom, academics and practitioners brought in, negotiated and projected in the future relations in which they were engaged elsewhere; they explored interchangeably their worlds and the ones of their interlocutors, loosely coupled themselves to new sets of relations and built multiple conjoint scenarios for the future, without tying themselves irremediably to any of them. Finally, the study shows that provisional relations were accompanied by a recursive shift in knowledge modes. Due to provisional relations developed in interaction, academics and practitioners not only managed to communicate, but they almost exchanged roles. During the vortex of interaction, academics passed from theory to practical theorizing, practitioners passed from an involved practical mode

to a reflexive and quasi-theoretical one, and then, as exchanges proceeded, the other way around.

All in all, this study shows that it is not easy to talk about a centripetal-centrifugal trade-off between academia and the practice world, nor about academics and practitioners as individuals which belong to different worlds between which exchanges are difficult, complicated or even impossible. Instead the study shows that academics and practitioners, their theories and their practices have both elements of similarity and elements of differentiation, that individuals pragmatically manipulated according to their purposes at hand and that, in turn, such manipulations, brought change both into their worlds and in the worlds of their exchange partners. By building provisional relations, academics managed to use elements of similarity in order to transform differences or refused elements of negatively-perceived similarity and transformed them into differences. They did so by combining in situ and ex situ knowledge, by moving up and down the socio-material webs and networks to which they constantly participate.

The study brings many contributions. First of all, it constitutes as one of the few empirical studies which have looked at the relation between theory and practice in organization science. Furthermore, it is one of the even fewer to have ever studied the micro dynamics of interaction between communities of academics and practitioners. Just as the theoretical study, the empirical study contributes to the reconceptualization of the theory-practice relation in a dynamic, relational, pragmatic and interactionist manner. It refuses dichotomies and unilateral relations and shows how continuous changes occur through psycho-social mechanisms that are characteristic not only to academics and practitioners, but to the social individuals in general. This way, the work suggests that there is a strong relation between our being, our knowing, our doing and what we are able to become. In particular, the sense of who we are with respect to others (eg,roles, positions, social identities) strongly determine what we know (our knowing both of the social kind- lay knowledge- and of the scientific kind), by means of what we do (the actions and interaction we perform daily in the groups and communities of practices to which

we contribute, the practices we perform, the discourses we enact, etc), and the constant interaction between any of these dimensions enables and at the same time constrains what we become (how we see ourselves, how our knowledge evolves and how our practices are brought forward through constant reiteration).

New Directions and On-going Studies

The dissertation as a whole has given birth to a series of new directions of research in which I am currently engaged. The first project is related to the knowing-doing-being-becoming argument and, in particular, to the exploration of how multiple identities allow individuals to explore alternative scenarios of becoming. I try to study the way in which individuals' participation to loosely coupled, extended social and material networks of knowledge and practices requires them more and more to have a malleable sense of self that would allow to stay connected to different networks despite inconsistencies and incongruities. I suggest that a sufficient level of malleability is reached through enacting provisional selves that enable to cope with the multiplicity of the social exchanges to which they are exposed, yet without tying themselves irremediably to any of them. I try then to show what consequences this might have for the way we think about identity in organization science, to how this can supplement social identity theory with multiple identity theory and contribute to seeing identity as process.

The second project is related to the relation between scientific knowledge and commonsense knowledge in organization science. In particular, by looking at the categorization strategies of academics and practitioners I try to investigate to which extent scientific and commonsensical knowledge are structured and typified similarly or differently. Preliminary results show that the two types of knowledge use essentially similar categorization strategies and distinctions. The study discusses how this might contribute to our understanding of organization science and to the way we perceive the knowledge of managers and all those outside academia.

An End to a Beginning

Coming back to the vignettes about the learned professor and the skilful jock, what lesson can we learn from such distinction? How can a sociologic study like this one contribute to a better understanding of such phenomena? I have argued that the distinction between the practical and the theoretical is used to warehouse society into groups. Dichotomies, stereotypes, cultural antinomies alienate and divide, no matter how we see it. They create fiction. But they also contribute to the making of reality. It is thus more adequate to say they create fiction in one place while rejecting it in another. As Latour argues (1987:176) "every time an inside/outside division is built, we should follow the two sides simultaneously, making up a list, no matter how long and heterogeneous, of all those who do the work", because as they connect people, artifacts, ideas, practices, in different times and spaces, dichotomies change and bring transformations. Paradoxically, through production and reproduction dichotomies overcome themselves and become multitude. They spread into *rhizomes*. In their seminal work "A Thousand Plateaus" philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1988) draw on the botanical metaphor of rhizome -thick horizontal underground stem of plants with entangled and expansive roots and shoots- in order to talk differently about human thought and knowledge diffusion. A rhizome works with planar and trans-species connections and it opposes to an arborescent conception of knowledge which works with vertical and linear connections. Therefore saying that theory and practice relations are rhizomic equals to saying they are multiply manifested, heterogeneous and entangled. It results that even if we accept that theorizing and practicing, academics and practitioners, science and commonsense belong to different cultural systems, we must also acknowledge that their various protrusions can join at any point with one another, can become concretized as bulbs or tubers, and can be cut up and fragmented only to regenerate. This means that understanding theory and practice is anything but a linear process. It is instead a rhizomic attempt to deal with rhizomes. It is a story of juxtapositions, achievements, translations, negotiations, metamorphosis and mutations. It is the

memory of words, thoughts and bodily clenches. It is a charade of selves and others. It is "a threshold, a door, a becoming between two multiplicities" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 249).

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PAPER 1: FROM GAPS TO TANGLES. THE THEORY-PRACTICE DEBATE IN ORGANIZATION STUDIES. STATE OF THE FIELD AND POSSIBLE DIRECTIONS

Abstract

The aim of the present work is to contribute to a better understanding of the relation between organization theory and management practice. By systematizing different literatures inside and outside the field of organization studies, the research identifies a series of positions to the theory-practice debate and unfolds some of their implicit assumptions and limitations. It is suggested that the theory-practice debate is founded on a set of recurrent dichotomies, such as academics versus practitioners, action versus knowledge, the scientific versus the non-scientific, that prevent the debate from moving forward. A new position called entwinement is developed in order to overcome dichotomies through reconciliation and integration. Accordingly, theory and practice constitute as a circular iterative process of action and cognition, science and common-sense enacted in the real world both by organization scholars and practitioners according to purposes at hand.

Key Words: *theory practice relation; gap; rigor; relevance; social construction; organization studies; social knowledge; entwinement;*

Introduction

It is common of nearly every field of science to develop a self-reflexive agenda related to the status and evolution of the discipline. Although Organization Science (OS) is a relatively new scientific field, in its more than 60 years of existence it has reflected most of the major trends, shifts and debates in the social sciences at large (Astley and Van de Ven 1983; Burrel and Morgan 1980; Cooper and Burrell 1988; Hinings and Greenwood, 2002, Pfeffer 1982). The question of how OS research can affect or be informed by management practice has been a central issue in the academic discourse as testified by the impressive number of presidential addresses and special issues dedicated to the argument. However, despite efforts, contributions have been surprisingly fragmented, contradictory and scarce on empirical investigations (Bartunek 2007; Bartunek and Rynes, 2010; Weick 2002, Daft and Lewin 1990; Jarzabkowski et al. 2010; Pfeffer and Sutton 2006; Shapiro et al. 2007; Van de Ven 2007). In most cases the debate has concerned the existence of a preoccupying theory-practice gap and contributions have revolved around the following dilemma: How good are we as researchers to develop valid knowledge which is of relevance to practitioners? (Tsoukas and Knudsen 2003). Considerable effort has been done in trying to clarify the meanings of words like 'relevance' and 'valid knowledge' (Gulati 2007; Bartunek et al. 2001), but few have considered that their sense cannot be determined *in abstracto*, without putting OS theory and managerial practice into context and without seriously questioning what we actually mean by 'organization science' and 'managerial practitioners' and which might be the relation(s) between them as manifested in the real world.

The present study takes a long step back and engages into a broader activity of sensemaking about the relationship between OS theory and management practice. First of all, it articulates an incursion into the theory-practice debate in the field of organization studies spanning from the institutionalization of OS as a scientific discipline and up to recent times. In particular, pre-existing arguments of the theory-practice debate are systematized according to a series of

dimensions which appear recurrent across contributions: (1) nature of theory and practice: how theory and practice are positioned with respect to a series of frequently mentioned categories such as knowledge and action, the scientific and the commonsensical, the abstract and the local; (2) the social, cultural and historical contextualization of the theory-practice relation: the actors, communities, spaces that are mentioned when talking about OS theory and managerial practice; (3) the type of relationship that is said to establish between the two: how theory and practice might be similar, different, connected or disconnected in the real world. Therefore rather than organize the literature by the theoretical frameworks that authors have employed, I have found it useful to cluster papers according to their stance on these three issues.

Basing on the three identified criteria a broad distinction has been introduced between the *transfer argument*, generally concerned with how theory can be put into practical activity, and the *construction argument*, questioning the ways in which theory and practice are produced, embodied and co-exist in the real world. Additionally, each of the two arguments is articulable in a set of sub-arguments or positions which deal with the theory-practice relation in relatively different, often contrasting ways. For example, within the transfer argument, the correspondence position suggests that under some conditions to be met, there are certain types of theories that can find a correspondent place in the world of practice, while the concordant position argues that theory can be put it into practice only through efforts of mutual agreement, coordination and synchronization. In the same way, within the construction argument, the incommensurate position considers OS academia and the world of practice as two completed differentiated social systems governed by separate, irreconcilable logics, while the equivalent position suggests the very opposite, that OS academia and the practice world are differentiated yet potentially overlapping systems or communities, with equivalent underlying theories or practices.

Throughout the paper I try to point out how each position builds on some positions and distinguishes from others and identify a set of common pivots for the structure of the entire debate. In particular, I suggest that when it comes to the relation between theory and practice,

the transfer and the construction arguments draw on a series of pervasive dichotomies. In the attempt to define science, scholars adopting a transfer approach oppose it to what is lay, practical and unscientific. Similarly, in the attempt to describe the logics of the practice world, scholars adopting a construction approach oppose it to the abstract and formal reasoning of science. This way, rigor versus relevance, knowledge versus action, science versus commonsense, academics versus practitioners become the main dichotomies on which the theory-practice debate draws. Since dichotomies appear as open-ended, symbolical, tautological and ontologically impossible to sustain, the study strived to go beyond the logics of contrast and contribute to the renewal of the theory-practice argument by means of reconciliation and integration.

Drawing on contributions in philosophy of science (Lobkowicz, 1983, Schutz 1967; Toulmin 1982) and sociology of science (Barnes e al, 1996, Collins 1985, Gilbert and Mulkay 1984, Knorr Cetina and Cicourel, 1981, Knorr-Cetina, 1999, Knorr-Cetina and Mulkay 1983, Pickering 1992) and on some contributions coming from OS scholarship (Astley, 1985, Astley and Zammuto, 1992, Czaniawska, 1997a, 1997b, Czarniawska and Sevon, 1996, 2005, Daft and Lewin, 2008, Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011, Hardy et al., 2001, Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2011, Weick, 1989, 1999, 2002, 2003), I delineate a new position called entwinement that is socially situated, practice-based, pragmatic and relational. From the entwinement perspective, theory and practice are reciprocal, entwined and constitute as a mixed language of dialogically related elements and socio-material configurations. Differently from previous discussions in the field, it is suggested that both OS academics and management practitioners practice and theorize by drawing on distributed systems of action and cognition, science and commonsense, that they combine in unique ways, according to purposes at hand.

The paper is articulated as follows. First of all, previous contributions to the argument are reviewed, systematized and grouped according to their main assumptions about the theory-practice relation. Secondly, two main arguments, the transfer and the construction argument are

identified, as well as their connected sub-arguments, the correspondent, the concordant, the incommensurate and the equivalent. Each position is described at length according to its main assumptions, limitations and controversies and according to how it connects or differentiates from the other positions. In the end, the entwinement position is proposed while emphasizing how it can advance the existing debate in the field. Last, a renewed research agenda is suggested and implications for the field of organization studies are discussed.

The transfer argument

According to the transfer view, theory and practice are two different modes that functionally characterize two different realities. Theory is defined as an arrangement of abstract concepts aimed at explaining, predicting and bringing change to phenomena in the real world while practice is seen as a form of worldly actionable behaviour (Augier et al., 2005, Gioia and Pitre 1990, Tranfield and Starkey, 1998). The transfer argument acknowledges the existence of at least two separate groups of social actors responsible for constituting the theory-practice relation: the OS scholars and the management practitioners. Traditionally, theory and practice are described as socially distributed in such ways that theory belongs mainly to the OS community and practice is predominantly a competence of management practitioners. Ideally, theory should follow a circular process. Derived from the world of practice, it should return within the world of practice as to guide the creation of management best practices (Baldridge et al., 2004, Hambrick, 1994). However researchers complain that neither things 'actually' happen and qualify the current state of the field as unsatisfactory (Anderson et al., 2001, Hambrick, 1994, Mowday, 1997, Huff, 2000, Lawler, 1985, Van de Ven, 2002, Webster and Starbuck, 1988). The flow from theory to practice is fragmented, accidental and discontinuous due to the existence of a persistent theory-practice gap, typically framed in two alternative ways, either as a knowledge transfer problem or as a knowledge production problem (Gulati, 2007, Shapiro et al., 2007, Tranfield and Starkey, 1998, Van de Ven and Johnson, 2006).

According to some contributions, theory and practice are two different yet correspondent modes of knowing. The correspondent position draws the attention to the necessity of a proper transfer between OS theory and managerial practices and identifies a set of tools through which meanings can be communicated from the side of academia to the one of practice. According to others, theory and practice are two different yet concordant modes of knowing such that theory can be put into practice and practice can inform theory but only upon agreement and/or synchronization between academics and practitioners. The correspondence view draws the attention to the fact that in order to reach a certain fit between the academic theories and the needs and relevance systems of practitioners, knowledge should be co-produced. As follows the correspondent and the concordant positions are explored, by emphasizing their implicit assumptions, their common points as well as their elements of distinction.

The correspondent view

According to the correspondent view, a piece of theory can always correspondently fit a missing piece in the puzzle of day to day managerial practice, as long as it is good theory. According to this perspective, ”there is nothing as practical as a good theory” (Lewin, 1951:486), meaning that under some conditions to be met, a full correspondence between theoretical knowledge and its practical application can be achieved. Good theory advances knowledge in a scientific discipline, and, at the same time, brings new insights to the world of practice (Dubin, 1969, Kaplan, 1964). The correspondent perspective is essentially an ecological-evolutionary one: the more rigorous a theory is, the closer to truth and, as a consequence, the higher its chances of survival both in the world of academia and in the world of practice (Anderson et al., 1988, Rosenthal, 1991). Accordingly management is a complex discipline that holds multiple and often times irreconcilable theories, that are selectively winnowed out and eventually cohere as the field evolves towards a greater scientific maturity (Baum and McKelvey, 1999). The greater the consensus reached about a concept in the world of academia, the higher its robustness and its applicability to the empirical problems in the world

of practice (Hambrick, 2007, Gordon and Howell, 1959, McKinley 2010, Pfeffer 1993, Pierson, 1959). From this perspective, the worst theories are destined to decline while the best ones will self-impose (Campbell et al., 1982, Locke and Latham, 2004, Rousseau, 2006, 2007); they will prove more and more fruitful as they become selectively and successively adapted to fit real-world entities (Donaldson, 1985, 1995, 1997, Eden, 2002, Tsang and Kwan, 1999). However if for evolutionary or critical realists the theory-practice gap is a question of adaptive fit and sequential selections (for a thorough review see McKelvey, 1997, Baum and McKelvey, 1999), most OS debates have more simply framed the gap as a knowledge transfer problem. Accordingly, theoretical contributions are disconnected from the world of practice both prior to formulation -since empirical research often fail to reach a clear scientific consensus on findings- (Rousseau 2007; Rousseau et al. 2008, Miner, 1984) and after formulation -that is, when they return to the practice world as policy (Hambrick, 1994, Pfeffer and Sutton, 2006, McKinley, 2007, Pelz, 1978). The transfer gap has been frequently attributed to lack of diffusion and awareness of OS theories within the world of practice. Accordingly, there is a direct relation between the diffusion of good or rigorous theories in the society and their likelihood of being implemented into practice (Rousseau, 2005, 2006). Practitioners should be informed about the advantages that good OS theories can provide for dealing with their day to day problems and should be given the cognitive instruments to make the best selections according to their purposes at hand (Davenport, 2006, Briner et al., 2009, Pfeffer and Sutton, 2006). As a consequence, if academics made stronger efforts of communication and dissemination of their research and if practitioners were more receptive towards such efforts the gap between theory and practice would significantly re-dimension. Additionally, since the transfer argument views language as the chief means by which information is encoded and transferred (Gergen and Joseph, 1996; Chia, 1996, Shapira, 2011), the theory-practice gap has often been framed as a language problem and complaints have revolved around the fact that academics systematically use technical terms which obscure the meaning of their messages to practitioners'

understanding. As a consequence, the necessary -but not always sufficient- condition for bridging the theory-practice gap is that scholars communicate their theories to practitioners and that they do so using a language that is accessible to them and that is depurified of scientific technicalities (Baldridge et al., 2004, Keleman and Bansal, 2002, Starkey and Madan, 2001). Once the contact between theories and practices occurs, all the rest of the phases, such as adoption and implementation, are assumed to spontaneously flow under the diligence of practitioners looking after their best interests (Donaldson et al., 2012, Miner, 2003).

The concordant view

The concordant view has become, together with the correspondent view, the dominant perspective in the theory-practice debate. Similarly to the correspondent perspective, theory and practice are said to belong to different stakeholders, OS scholars and management practitioners (Van de Ven, 2007), but the relationship between them is no longer perceived as linear and immediate but as constituted through efforts of personalization, adaptation and mutual coordination. Moreover, while the correspondent view associates solutions with rigorous theories, the coordinate view places its pillars in the issue of relevance. Instead of trying to reach the singular 'true' solution, academics and practitioners should struggle to build together optimal solutions that would increase the theory-practice fit. Accordingly, such fit can be achieved only when the theoretical underpinnings of academic research are either interesting or useful for the needs of practitioners (Bettis, 1991, Rynes et al., 2007, Van de Ven, 2007). The fact that most of the times this does not occur (Abrahamson and Eisenman, 2001, Hambrick, 1994, Mowday, 1997, Tranfield and Starkey, 1998) is attributed to the fact that academics and practitioners have different 'relevance systems' so that the theories that are relevant to academics are irrelevant to practitioners' daily practices and *viceversa* (Baldridge et al., 2004, Bartunek et al., 2010, Daft and Lewin, 1990). Different relevance systems are in turn associated to the existence of different modes of knowledge production: academics and practitioners have different interests, practices and purposes which determine them to see the world through

different “lenses” and to produce different kinds of knowledge (Bennis and O’Toole, 2005, Hambrick, 1994, 2007). Specifically, not only academics and practitioners look in divergent directions, but they produce knowledge at a different pace because scholarly theories are not aligned with the rapidly changing needs of complex business environments (Abrahamson and Eisenman, 2001, Bartunek, 2007, Mowday, 1997, Smith and Lewis, 2011, Suddaby et al., 2011). Since the situation is deemed unsatisfactory, proposed solutions have considered that academics and practitioners should bridge differences through efforts of cooperation, co-production and re-synchronization. For instance, academics should design publications and research according to how attractive and accessible, pragmatic and valuable they are to practitioners (Starkey and Madan, 2001, Pettigrew 201). Some contributions have gone as far as suggesting that academics and practitioners should join into a shared mode of knowledge production called ‘engaged scholarship’, understood as the creation of pluralistic networks of collaboration between researchers and practitioners, such as university-research-industry partnerships and alliances, research forums or networks of co-design (Anderson et al., 2001, Mohrman et al., 2001, Pettigrew 2001, Van de Ven and Johnson, 2006, Van de Ven, 2007). Others have suggested academics and practitioners should invent new synchronization modes (Amabile et al., 2001; Huff, 2000, Lawler 1985; Wicks and Freeman, 1998) or have more broadly proposed the institutionalization of multidisciplinarity and interaction there where the soil for science-practice dialogue has been particularly arid (Cummings, 2007, Bartunek et al., 2001, Tranfield and Starkey, 1998).

Implicit assumptions and limitations of the transfer argument

The transfer argument has been object of much criticism: some scholars have expressed their doubts about the importance of engaging in disputes about knowledge transfer (Shapiro et al., 2007), while others have drawn the attention to the fact that the gap argument appears full of reification, linearity and substantivization (Weick, 1999, 2002, Daft and Lewin, 1990, Raelin

2007, Pfeffer and Sutton, 2006; Bartunek et al., 2001). Similarly, the concordant position has been criticized for being utopian and for ignoring important issues such as biases, multidisciplinarity, and particularism (McKelvey, 2006) and for dismissing the important issue of knowledge creation through dialectics of creative tensions, difference, competing forces and conflict (Daft and Lewin, 2008, Weick, 1979). However, I propose that the aspect that seems to mostly characterize both the correspondent and the coordinate positions of the transfer view is their foundation on a set of recurrent dichotomies: rigour versus relevance, knowledge versus action, science versus commonsense, academics versus practitioners, are just some of the cardinal distinctions upon which the transfer mode was created and proliferated. As follows some of these distinctions are illustrated by emphasizing their intrinsically ambiguous, open-ended, symbolic nature.

Rigour versus relevance

First of all, an intense debate on the possibility of making research rigorous and/or relevant has recently emerged at the core of OS (Gulati, 2007, Palmer et al., 2009). Depending on the case, rigor or relevance, correspondence or concordance, 'mode 1' or 'mode 2' were said to give academics the key to breakthrough practitioners' day to day worlds. Rigorous knowledge or 'mode 1' is said to be theoretical knowledge generated primarily by scholarly creative efforts and successively transferred through dissemination to practitioners; relevant knowledge or 'mode 2' is said to be problem-driven knowledge emerging from a context of application that implies the convergence of OS scholars to practitioners' knowledge requirements. While some have argued for the supremacy of one of the two positions and alluded to an implicit trade-off (Mintzberg, 2004, Shrivastava and Mitroff, 1984), others frequently pledged for academia's possibilities to reach them both (Anderson et al., 2001, Bartunek, 2002, Baldridge et al., 2004, Gulati, 2007, Mowday, 1997, Pettigrew 2001, Tushman and O'Reilly, 2007). Nevertheless, as much as previous contributions have tried to distinguish between relevance and rigor, the two concepts still lack clarity and boundaries between them continue to be ill-defined. For example,

despite its frequent use, the concept of relevance has remained slippery and difficult to measure. Most frequent definitions have referred to relevance as to the ability of OS theory to "make a difference" to those who engage day by day in the practice of management (Augier and March, 2007, Romme, 2003), either in terms of comprehensibility (Thomas and Tymon, 1982), interestingness (Baldridge et al., 2004) or meaningfulness (Augier and March, 2011, Gioia and Corley, 2011, Kilduff and Kelemen, 2001, Weick, 2002). Yet many others have considered relevance in a pragmatic sense and defined it as the degree to which OS theories can fit in the day to day realities of management practitioners and address their particular needs, interests, specific problems, daily dilemmas and decision making processes (Aram and Salipante, 2003, Cohen, 2007, Mohrman et al., 2001, Starkey and Madan, 2001, Van de Ven and Johhnson, 2006). Not only are such definitions significantly heterogeneous but they avoid questions about to whom and in which manner a theory can 'make a difference' and with what deriving consequences (Nicolai and Seidl, 2010, Rynes, 2002). This way the relevance concept becomes reified and decontextualized from both theory and practice worlds.

Similarly, those who call for a resolution of the theory-practice gap by means of 'good' or 'rigorous' theories use ambiguous terms to define the concepts. For example, Deutsch (1997) and Rousseau (2006) argue that rigor is a way of justifying one's arguments according to empirical evidence; Staw (1995) defines rigor as conceptual adequacy, rigorous methodology and consistency of previous empirical evidence, but acknowledges that the three criteria are highly subjective, relative, and difficult to measure. Similarly, McKelvey (2003) talks about accuracy, consistency, scope, simplicity and fruitfulness, but does not specify how and whether these ingredients can be combined to create a rigor recipe. In either cases, little is said about how each of these characteristics is expected to link theory to practice. To make matters more complicated, what some have considered rigorous has been defined by others as relevant and the other way around. For instance, some groups of scholars have argued that being relevant is a question of emphasizing the particular at the expense of the general and rigorous is concerned

with generalization at the expense of particularization (Aram and Salipante, 2003, Johnson and Van de Ven, 2006, Mohrman et al., 2001). Contrarily, other groups have argued the that rigor is concerned with scientific details and disciplinary technicalities (Starkey and Madan, 2001) while relevance offers practitioners a big picture about the complexity of the real world (Grey, 2001, Kilduff and Kelemen, 2001, Weick, 2002). All in all, it appears that the rigor-relevance antinomy defines dilemmas that are ontologically and semantically difficult, if not impossible, to resolve. This has led some scholars to suggest that relevance and rigor are standardized concepts whose meanings are largely equivocal, open, symbolical and shifting from one debate to another (Kieser and Leiner, 2009, Nicolai and Seidl, 2010, Weick, 2002), although more is to be understood about the reasons behind and consequences of the rigor-relevance debate in our field.

Mind versus action

The transfer argument seems to stably associate knowledge with mind reflection and, more in general, with the scholarly world, and action with managerial behavioral patterns and daily routines. Accordingly, academics are the ones who possess knowledge: they reflect and create theories that practitioners must assimilate and transform into action. From such perspective, the so-called transfer gap appears as a divide between mind and body, a segregation between the intellectual and the behavioural, marking the existence of different social, material and institutional spheres. Such divide has taken numerous forms within the knowing-doing language game: some have said that managers know what they should do but do not put it in practice (Guest, 2007, Pfeffer and Sutton, 1999, Rynes et al., 2002); others have claimed that academics know what practitioners should do but cannot substitute them in taking action (Van de Ven 2002, March, 1999, Bartunek, 2003); while most have suggested that practitioners do without thinking (Frederickson,1984, Mintzberg, 1973) and that academics think without ever acting (Beyer and Trice, 1982, Lawler, 1985, Hodgkinson et al., 2001). In all cases the problem at hand seems to be that of finding in which ways and under which conditions theoretical knowledge

may be turned into action, although it is less clear how action and mindfulness in academia are different or similar with action or mindfulness in the practice world and contributions dealing with this issue have been surprisingly scarce (Rynes et al., 2001). If mind and action are indeed two different modes of being that functionally characterize two different communities little is known about the process by which such dichotomy manifests in each community and about the effects it triggers. Whereas it is one thing to assert that theory is of the mind and practice of the body, and that mind influences physical activity of practice, it is quite another thing to say how this happens.

The scientific versus the commonsensical

As already shown, one of the main implicit assumptions of the transfer argument is that theory belongs almost exclusively to the scientific mode, while practice is characteristic of non-scientific, commonsensical, managerial worlds. Although there are no studies in the OS field to have directly tackled the science versus non-science dichotomy, it is commonly agreed that the roots of the dichotomy can be traced back to the historical moment of split between scientific and practical rationality (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2011). In philosophy of science such split is said to date since Antiquity and beginning with Aristotle's distinction between contemplative and practical life (Lobkowicz, 1967) or since Modern Age, beginning with the industrial revolution and the institutionalization of modern science (Kuhn, 1970, Lakatos, 1970, Shapin, 1982). In the field of organization studies, it is widely acknowledged that from the 1910s through the 1940s writings in the emerging field of OS were tightly coupled with the interests of the practice world and served as a support function for manager's practical problem-solving, while from the late 1950s, given the extension of requirements from the practice world and the consequent enlargement of OS academia, theoretical inquiries have become more complex and heterogeneous, and have shifted from being practice-oriented to being increasingly science-oriented (Sahlin-Andersson and Engwall, 2002, **Starbuck, 2003**, Walsh et al., 2006). As extensively shown by numerous contributions (see for example Alvesson and Wilmott, 1992,

Burrel and Morgan, 1979, Deetz 1996, Morgan, 1980, McKelvey, 1997, Sandberg and Tsoukas, 1011, Walsh et al., 2006), during its evolution the field of OS has acquired a 'scholastic', 'rational-scientific' or 'modern' attitude towards the world, in line with its scientific identity. From such a perspective, the task of the researcher became that of observing and theoretically representing the world of objects through external, detached observation, while distinguishing oneself neatly from the objects of inquiry (Taylor, 1985, Toulmin, 1982). Additionally, scientific modernity is said to have built the grand narrative of emancipation according to which all sciences, OS included, committed themselves to improve the world of practice through discovery and productive transformation of knowledge (Lyotard, 1984, Whyte, 1956). Accordingly, science 'ought to bear fruits in work and organize all men with the sacred duty of improving and transforming the conditions of life' (Lobkowicz, 1967:50); it ought to apply a single and identical method to each and every field of knowledge, from the scientific to the lay, so that all men can progress with their own means towards the same direction (Whyte, 1956).

Despite acknowledging the commonality of goals between the science and the practice world, this shift is said to have pushed in time academics and managers to perceive themselves as two distinct categories of individuals performing different roles and functions in the society (Walsh et al. 2006). In particular, it has been suggested that just as it happened in all the social sciences, the emancipation ideal has lead OS scholars to consider scientific inquiry nobler than practical inquiries and to see themselves as somehow superior to management practitioners (Beech et al., 2010; Cannella and Paetzold, 1994, Gergen and Thatchenkery, 1996; Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2010, Zald, 1993). It thus resulted that the OS scholar is the one who –by virtue of scientific training- thinks more clearly, objectively, profoundly, or creatively than the layman, and thus deserves a voice within the organization (Deetz, 1996, Gergen and Joseph, 1996, Mitroff, 1972, Raelin, 2007). His mission is to reveal underlying patterns that the practitioners cannot see and to model their behaviour through theoretical prescriptions (Donaldson, 1985, 2003); which should be incremental with respect to already accepted rules of thumb (Thomas

and Tymon, 1982, Vermeulen, 2007) and enlightening with respect to self-evident solutions (Priem and Rosenstein, 2000).

There are manifold contributions which have audaciously claimed the impossibility and dangers of a rational-mechanistic view of the OS field. For example, authors such as Sandberg and Tsoukas (2011), Chia (2003), Clegg and Hardy (1996), Deetz (1996), Gioia and Pitre (1990); McGahan (2007) or Raelin (2007) pointed out the disadvantages of seeing the theory-practice relation as decontextualized, a-temporal, abstracted or simplified. Others have even claimed the existence of a reversed science-non science relation, in which academic knowledge is commonsensical, simplified, pseudo-scientific and thus inferior to and unable pace with managerial practice (eg. Daft and Lewin, 1990, Ghoshal, 2005, Mintzberg, 2004, Shrivastava, 1986, Van Maanen et al., 2007). While the latter perspective will be treated in length in the following sections, for now I limit to pointing out that opinions on the science-commonsense distinction have been contradictory to such point as to arise confusions about which is which. There is still much to be explained about scientific superiority or inferiority, not only in the field of OS but in the social science at large, and, as to my knowledge, no criteria have been formulated for distinguishing the scientific from the non-scientific and for understanding how one can improve, complement or be detrimental to the other (Agrawal, 1995, Toulmin, 1982).

In absence of further elucidations, the image of academia and practice world as the 'citadel of science' and the 'untutored public outside of it' appears to have symbolic, even romanticized connotations (Martin, 1998) which devoid management academia and management practice of their diversity and internal conflicts (Hardy et al. 2001).

OS academics versus management practitioners: towards segregated social worlds

As shown by the previously illustrated dichotomies, rigor and relevance, action and mind, the scientific and the non-scientific, mark the separation line between two different social worlds, the world of practice and the world of academia. However boundaries between dichotomies are often blurred and distinguishing criteria are ambiguous, if not contradictory.

Furthermore, the meanings that scholars attach to the two poles constituting each dichotomy seem to be shifting and equivocal. Additionally, there is a significant predominance of academics' voices with respect to those of practitioners'. Most definitions in the theory-practice gap argument are arbitrarily established by the OS scholarly communities and rarely consider the points of view of management practitioners (Bettis, 1991, Kieser and Leiner, 2009). Throughout the heterogeneous perspectives described so far, a point of convergence seems to hold: OS academics and management practitioners constitute as two completely separate worlds holding different perspectives, interests, capabilities, resource constraints and incentives (Beyer and Trice, 1982, Kanter and Eccles, 1992, Shapiro et al., 2007; Shrivastava and Mitroff, 1984, Tranfield and Starkey, 1998). As a consequence, there is a high cohesion within academia and the practice world but almost no connectivity in between them (Bartunek et al., 2001). For instance academics talk to each other, meet during conferences, read and build on each other's works, but have few connections with the practice world (Hambrick, 1994). In the same way, practitioners interact daily with actors migrating in and around their organizations but only seldom consider academics as meaningful points of reference (Pfeffer and Fong, 2002). An implicit assumption is that such segregated worlds would nevertheless be able to find a communication bridge on the grounds of rationality (eg. the search of both parts for rigor and relevance, for the perfect fit between what they need and what the others could offer). In particular, the initiative in the transfer argument seems to belong predominantly to academia. For example, academics strive to influence managers' modes of thinking or incentivize some desired patterns of behaviour through activities such as communication, consulting, decision support, business training, joint research projects and so on (Amabile et al., 2001, Hambrick, 2007, Rynes and Trank, 1999). Rather than reciprocally, change should ideally occur unilaterally and centrifugally, from academia to the practice world and always by modifying 'the other side' (Rynes et al., 1999, Shapiro et al., 2007). However, the new wave of preoccupations with relevance of academic theory to the world of practice indicates that

practitioners also manage to influence what academics write and how they do research (Barley et al., 1989, Corley and Gioia, 2011, Gioia and Corley, 2002, Starkey and Madan, 2001, Walsh et al., 2005), although investigations about this presumptively mutual influence process have been scarce. As loud as the separateness message seems to resound throughout the transfer argument, there have been few systematic attempts to draw a parallel between the two communities. Not only the practice world receives little attention in the gap argument but it is not clear what makes OS academia qualitatively different from the practice world, and which are the ways in which such differences manifest in the structure and organizing of the two worlds (Bartunek et al., 2004).

The construction argument

With the construction argument, several changes occur. Firstly, there are growing concerns with epistemological and ontological assumptions about the relation between theory and action in the social world (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2011). Secondly, there is a vivid interest in understanding the matters within the context in which they are embedded (Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011). Instead of suggesting how theory can be put into practice, the construction perspective questions the ways in which theory and practice are situated and co-exist in the social world. Accordingly, any theory or practice is situated within a social, historical, cultural and material space and time and one can compare theory and practice only by studying their worldly manifestations. However, despite some unifying principles, assumptions about the nature of the theory-practice relation have been very heterogeneous, if not contradictory, throughout the construction argument. As follows I identify various positions with respect to the theory-practice relation -incommensurability, theoretical and practical equivalence - I try to emphasize their implicit assumptions and show how they contribute to advancing the argument. At the same time, I point to some of their contradictions and indicate a series of possible limitations.

Incommensurability

The incommensurability argument suggests that theory and practice cannot be reasonably compared, even in cases in which they occur in coincidence (Sandelands, 1990). The basic idea is that theory and practice are two logically incommensurable modes of thinking that generate two autonomous, autopoietic, completely differentiated social systems (Luhmann, 1996). From such perspective, theory is a prerogative of the science system and practice is a prerogative of the business system. They both belong to the meta-system of society but manifest as two specifically designated and differentiated systems or social games (Kieser and Leiner, 2009; 2011, March and Sutton, 1997). Incommensurability situates in opposition to the transfer argument. If in the transfer argument the relationship between theory and practice is linear and unilateral, in the incommensurable argument the relation is completely lacking. Even if practices might develop somehow differently in the presence of theory, the two cannot causally affect each other; both the practice and the scientific systems structure their inquiries using the functional categories that they possess. Consequently, managers cannot be taught by academic theory what to do during their day to day work (March and Sutton, 1997, Mintzberg, 1990) (eg.“You can’t teach swimming or management in a lecture hall” Mintzberg, 1990:175), in the same way in which theories cannot find an adequate form of expression in the practice world (Scherer, 1998).

By adopting a slightly different perspective, Sandelands (1990) shifts the argument from incommensurable social systems to incommensurable ways of knowing at the individual level and argues that theory is the knowledge that individuals use to explain things and practice is the knowledge that gets things done; the theory mode is incommensurable with respect to the practice mode in the same way in which explanation is to understanding, generalization to particularisation, and know what to know how (Sandelands, 1990). As a consequence, even in those cases in which OS scholars and practitioners might look at the same phenomena, due to their different knowing modes they will see different problems, opportunities and challenges and

will respond in different and incommensurable ways (Czarniawska, 2001, Kieser and Leiner, 2007).

Despite its clear conceptual positioning, the incommensurable position suffers from several shortcomings. First of all, either if they perceived academia and the business as two incommensurable social systems or as two incommensurable conceptual categories, authors usually failed to identify the exclusive characteristics (eg institutional logics, norms, rules, internal organization, etc) of each system or category and trace their boundaries within the greater system of society. For example, it is not clear to which extent contextualized reasoning, know-how and understanding are characteristic of the practice world and uncharacteristic to academia. In the same way, hardly has any contribution pointed out in which ways abstract reasoning, know what and explanation are characteristic of academia and at the same time irreconcilable with the business world. Paradoxically, the same authors that have argued for the theory-practice incommensurability have also suggested that the two systems might not be so incommensurable after all because they are not operatively closed but open and permeable. "There is nothing so practical about theory (but it may be good to have around)", argues Sandelands (1990: 259) indicating to the fact that despite incommensurability, theory and practice might still be able to stimulate each other, to find a momentum in space and time in which to build a temporary interaction system that would enable them to communicate and successively translate outcomes to their original systems (Kieser and Leiner, 2009). For instance, it is common knowledge that many OS scholars teach in business schools, write practitioner-oriented books and offer consulting services to companies or that management students or business practitioners earn business schools degrees and move on to working for business firms (Pfeffer and Fong, 2004). These various 'contaminations' (Kieser and Leiner, 2009) or 'misunderstandings' (Seidl, 2009) might seem to indicate the presence rather than the absence of common qualities on which theory and practice can be compared. While awaiting

further clarifications, these aspects constitute as internal paradoxes of the incommensurability position.

Equivalence

The equivalence argument suggests that science and practice worlds are either theoretically or practically equivalent. Critical theories inside and outside the management discipline commonly argue that academia and the practice worlds are two different but potentially equivalent social systems that manage to differentiate and stay apart by means of individuals' knowledge, interests, values and control mechanisms that critical theories strive to reflectively scrutinize. Action theories and situated or practice theories argue that academia and the practice world are different but potentially equivalent communities of practice which hold different yet potentially equivalent action theories or practice theories. As follows I indicate the streams of literature that have contributed to advancing the equivalence argument and show how each of them has differently carried on the idea that theory might be reducible to practice or *vice versa*.

Critical theory, conceptual equivalence and the interest hypothesis

Just as in the incommensurable view, the equivalence argument conceptualizes science and practice as small social systems with inherent boundaries and internal mechanisms of integration, mostly circumscribed by a speciality area. However the two systems are commensurable, reducible and substantially equivalent. In particular, according to the equivalence argument the world of theory is reducible to the one of practice. Theoretical concepts in the field of OS are equivalent to the concepts that permeate the practice world but they are 'disguised' by academia under the 'straightjacket of science' (Daft and Lewin, 1990) for purposes of power and legitimacy (Pfeffer and Fong, 2002, Starbuck, 2006, Sandberg and Alvesson, 2011). Scientific knowledge is labelled as 'pseudoscientific', 'inauthentic' and 'superficial'. Theory is not real because it doesn't say much about what 'actually' goes on in the world (Starbuck, 2006); it is 'theory for theory's sake rather than theory for utility's sake'

(Corley and Gioia, 2011:22). Rigid, narrow in scope, distant from the phenomena studied and published in journals that are opaque to other social actors outside academia (Leavitt, 1989), it is characterized by “a welter of misbegotten observations and inauthentic processes" (Sandelands and Drazin, 1989: 458), “contorted, ponderous prose” (Hambrick, 2007:1349) “congealed sentences, arcane neologisms, and mind-numbing qualifications” (Van Maanen et al., 2007: 1150), which turn out to be more commonsensical than business managers’ most trivial theories (Leavitt, 1989, Ghoshal, 2005, Sutton and Staw, 1995). More contentiously, it has been argued that ‘theory for theory’s sake’ is actually ‘theory for interest’s sake’ because it is inescapably produced, transmitted, and legitimized with respect to the practice world through a variety of power laden mechanisms of control (Alvesson and Willmott, 1996, Beyer and Trice, 1982, Cooper and Burrell, 1988, Frost 1980, Grey, 2004, Pettigrew et al., 2001, Whitley, 1984). For instance, internal mechanisms of OS academia such as tenure, promotion, publication and funding are said to have politically shaped academic theories while keeping them apart from the knowledge produced in the practice world (Alvesson, Ashcraft, and Thomas, 2008, Gabriel, 2010, McMullen and Shepard, 2006, Mintzberg, 2004, Sandberg and Alvesson, 2011, Walsh, 2011, 2012, Walsh et al., 2007). This in turn has limited the theory-practice exchange to academics’ comfort zones in which they can impose intellectual authority without the risk of losing credibility (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2011, Bedeian, 2003, 2004, Mintzberg, 2005, Bennis and O’Toole, 2005).

The equivalence perspective has been predominant across postmodernist critical theories in both management and the social science at large and it usually positions in opposition to the transfer argument. Accordingly, scientific knowledge is given a negative connotation: it is no longer generally valid and progressive; instead it is the mean through which self-interested scientists build artificial boundaries between them and the rest of the world (Gieryn, 1983, Whitley,1984). Theory thus is considered outdated and linked to modern ideals of omnipotence and control (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992, Willmott, 2003). Similarly, academics are no longer

open-minded, disinterested and impartial individuals who act as the 'invisible hand' of science, but interested, self-referential, and manipulative social actors. Their biased, at times immoral, mode of thinking is opposed to the (almost exemplary) mode of thinking of practitioners which is natural, spontaneous, generative and creative (Ghoshal, 2005, Mintzberg, 2004), in line with postmodernist ideals of emancipation through action (**Knorr-Cetina, 1983**). Since the proposed solution of the equivalence argument is often that of eliminating all knowledge that is redundant if not detrimental to the good functioning of the practice world, the role of theory in the society and the legitimacy of academia as social community are strongly questioned. Another frequently proposed solution has been the complete re-organization of the field of organization studies, from its methodologies of doing research to its incentives, publication and career mechanisms (Alvesson et al., 2008, Leavitt, 1989).

Critical theories have brought considerable contributions to re-establish symmetry between the world of theory and that of practice and have pointed out with high scrutiny the shortcomings and power mechanisms underlying the view of OS field as science and of Os theory as a superior way of knowing. Nevertheless, even though critical scholars position themselves in complete opposition with the theory-practice transfer argument, many of their arguments seem to get dangerously close to the positions they are criticizing (Alvesson and Willmott 1992). For instance, similarly to the transfer argument, the critical theory remains prevalently individualistic and voluntaristic and it largely ignores the social dynamics within which outcomes are shaped and reshaped day by day in the real world. For instance, it has been suggested that the academia-practice power imbalance is more complex and dynamic than accounted by critical theories. Throughout its brief history as an institutionalized scientific field, OS has changed several times its positioning with respect to the practice world (Augier et al., 2005) so that influences occurred not only from OS academia to the practice world but also the other way around, as academics became less owners of their own resources and more dependent on the resources of other communities (Barley et al., 1988, Gioia and Corley, 2002; Pfeffer and

Fong 2002, Walsh et al., 2006). Similarly, some contributions have suggested that it is not only OS scholars who seek for legitimization through their theories but also managers who use OS theories in order to legitimate their own courses of actions and that generally the world of management is equally pervaded with sophisticated mechanisms of self-interest and control (Astley and Zammuto, 1992, Willmott and Alvesson, 2012).

Even more importantly, critical positions rarely manage to explain how that which we call knowledge is constituted by the interested groups and accepted by others nor does it specify wherein, at what junctures, and in which way, contextual factors such as social interests enter particularly social objects and alter their nature (Knorr-Cetina, 2009). It follows that to view science as the disinterested search for credibility might be, in its own way, as misleading as to view it as the disinterested search for truth (Law et al., 1980). In all cases, theory-practice dynamics might appear oversimplified if we consider that outcomes are seldom consciously calculated, or even intended, by any of the parts involved (Czarniawska, 2008; Lawrence et al., 2009).

Action theory and a new kind of theoretical equivalence

Action theorists (Argyris and Schon, 1974, Schon, 1983) claim the supremacy and self sufficiency of practice with respect to theory. Just as in the other positions, theory and practice are seen as two segregated modes of being which belong to different communities but a new distinction is made between theory and practice of academia and theory and practice of managers. Specifically, action theories focus on the field of practice and in particular on the relation between reflection, knowledge and action within fields of practice. Differently from the case of the transfer positions, action theorists no longer see practical knowledge as a derivative of scientific knowledge, but as a distinct mode of knowing in its own right. Accordingly, practice is a complex and self-sufficient field of action able to internally generate theoretical considerations –also known as ‘action theories’ or ‘tacit rules’ (Polany, 1966) or ‘know how’ (Argyris and Schon, 1974) – which are fruit of managers’ personal reflection and which enable

them to generate from the inside more knowledge than scientific theory at its best could ever provide from the outside .

Action theory has been a dominant perspective in organizational studies, especially in the theories concerning organizational and individual learning processes (for a review see Easterby-Smith et al., 2004) and has made a lasting contributions to our understanding of the theory-practice relation by bringing attention to the issue of knowing in practice as a distinct mode of being that is independent both from doing in practice and from knowing in theory. However two serious limitations might be considered in relation with practical knowing, as vividly captured by the following statement: 'When someone reflects while in action, he becomes a researcher. He is not dependent on the categories of established theory and technique but constructs a new theory of the unique case' (Schon, 1983:68). As emphasized by Schon, action theories are often compared to rational cognitive maps in possession of scrupulous 'lay scientists' that search for scientific rules in their own minds rather than in the outside world. From this perspective, there might be no substantial difference between the action theories of practitioners and the expert theories generally attributed to academia. This way what has been kicked out the door seems to come back right through the window because the theory-practice dilemma is not resolved, but just removed (see Sandelands, 1990). Despite the main claim of action theories that knowing in practice is inherently connected to action and social experience, the relations between action, action theories, and other types of knowledge of the social, cultural or professional kind, have been marginal. For instance, academics remain ill-defined within action theory and it is not clear whether they too are to be considered as reflective practitioners whose behavior is ruled by action theories. Even though they do not provide explicit answers to such questions, action theorists strongly support the relevance argument and suggest that in order to increase the theory-practice fit, OS scholars should produce actionable knowledge as similar as possible to action theories of practitioners. In doing so, they should acquire a more empirical attitude towards theorizing that would enable them to personally and pragmatically understand things

before transmitting them to others (**Argyris 2003**, Sandelands and Srivatsan, 1993). Nevertheless, a set of key relations remain unclear despite these indications. For example, it is not clear which is the relation between academics' action theories and their scholarly theories, between academics' action theories and practitioners' action theories or, for that matter, between any of the previously mentioned. All in all, boundaries appear blurred and mobile while they vaguely recall the manifold dichotomies of the transfer argument.

The situated perspective and practical equivalence

With the complete practice-turn in OS, many of the questions left unanswered by action theories are spontaneously resolved and their arguments advanced. Even if action theories continue to occupy the central place, researchers take on a different perspective rooted in phenomenological theories of action and in the ethnometodological tradition of understanding day to day action and mundane knowledge production. Priority is given to the ways in which people deal with their day to day events, to the practical necessities, uncertainties, and urgencies in which they are entangled during mundane social exchanges (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2011, Schatzki, 2005). As a consequence practice is re-absorbed into the social systemic elements in which it is entrenched (Gherardi, 2000, Jarzabkowski, 2008, Nicolini et al., 2003) and the attention shifts from the generation of theories that might eventually result useful for practice to the deep engagement with the study of the 'here and now' of the practice world (Jarzabkowski et al., 2010; Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011).

Differently from the transfer argument, knowledge is no longer abstract, decontextualized and impersonal, but transactional, open ended, inherently social and relational (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2011, Weick, 2003). Knowing stands for a participated inquiry in which the inquirer does not remain outside the situation like a spectator; but is 'thrown' inside and must handle things from within (Orr, 1996, Tsoukas and Vladimirou, 2002, Yanow and Tsoukas, 2009, Weick, 2003). Therefore, knowing is synonymous with being, becoming and participating in the unfolding totality of the practice world. It follows that one can never know alone, but only as

situated within continuously changing social and material webs of practice (see Brown and Duguid, 1991, 2001, Bechky, 2003, Feldman and Pentland, 2003, Gherardi and Nicolini, 2000, Orr 1992, Orlikowski, 2002, Tsoukas and Chia, 2002) and it is only within such configurations that both theory and practice can be fully comprehended (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2011). As a consequence, if in the transfer argument practice was seen as a derivative of theory now the roles are inverted and theory is seen as a derivative of practice.

The first and most important shortcoming of the situated approach is to have made almost no effort to deal explicitly with the relation between theory and practice in organization science. However, extrapolations of the practice framework to the theory-practice debate might lead us to consider academic and managerial practice as two equivalent social and material communities of practice with equivalent knowing-doing strategies. From this perspective, theorizing would be seen as a practice among others and academics and managers as members of two practice communities belonging to the social world. The focus would become that of understanding theory and practice as situated rather than as broad abstract categories, as bodily and contextualized activities instead of mental and cognitive entities (Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011). However, despite the increasing number of studies dealing with the most various aspects of the day to day practices and sense-making activities in managerial communities few have thought to study academia in the same manner. There is almost no practice lens study that tackles the process of academic knowledge production within mundane, day to day contexts. Additionally, there are no attempts to draw a line between the academia and the management world as different, similar or interrelated communities of practice. Surprisingly, just as in all the previous positions, practice theories frequently juxtapose situated knowledge to a mysterious type of decontextualized knowledge called ‘expertise’. Expert knowledge is of a technical-rational type and is ontologically and epistemologically opposite to situated knowledge and practical rationality (Raelin, 2007, Sandberg and Tsoukas 2011, Shotter, 1993); it belongs not only to academics but equally to managers, planners and policy makers and despite its invalidity

it is commonly ”deemed to be superior to everything that is local, situated, manual” (Yanow, 2004:18).

It results that paradoxically practice scholars largely deny and at the same time implicitly acknowledge the existence of something that remains outside embodied, situated and emerging patterns of human interaction and that they call ‘expertise’. This way, despite the potential of practice theories to make several important and unique contributions to our understanding of the social construction of the theory-practice relation, their assumptions re-propose, just like action theories and critical theories, some of the dichotomies of the transfer argument .

The Entwinement Position

Drawing on some contributions in OS scholarship that are integrated with insights from sociology of knowledge, philosophy and sociology of science I attempt to delineate a new perspective that I shall call the entwinement position and strive to show how it can renew the construction argument.

The entwinement position answers some of the open question in the incommensurable and equivalent positions, takes into consideration most of the insights coming from the situated paradigm and attempts to advance them further in such way that strong dichotomies lying frequently at the core of the transfer argument are overtly questioned and significantly re-dimensioned. Ideal-types of theory and practice having dominated most of insofar described approaches are left aside and priority is given to the study of hybrid social forms of theorizing and practicing. Inquiries focus on how theory and practice are actually embodied and distributed in the social world, on how they are similar or different, and, on how they are imbricate or isolated, dialectically or dialogically related. As follows, I elaborate on the main aspects of the entwinement view and argue the importance of considering the theory-practice relation as socially situated, imbricated, entwined and reciprocal. Then I try to articulate such view by describing OS academics and management practitioners as social actors caught in social-

material webs that imply at the same time distributed action and cognition, practices and knowledge systems, science and commonsense.

Theory and practice as socially situated

First of all, theory and practice should be studied within the social context in which they are embedded. As suggested by the practice turn, neither theory nor practice exist outside the social world; they are embodied and distributed differently between social actors, groups and communities (Schatzki, 2001). Accordingly, science is a complex, interdisciplinary, fragmented bundle of groups and subgroups of organized individuals (universities, research centres, professional categories etc), their material practices (eg, observing, writing, reviewing, talking in public, teaching, publishing, disseminating, etc) and their material products (books, articles, lectures, oral stories, etc) (Alvesson et al. 2008, Gabriel, 2008, Garud, 2008, Hardy et al., 2001).

In the same way, practitioners constitute in bundles of organizational, professional, occupational, communities of practice characterized by more or less specific material practices (eg. observing, writing, planning, strategizing, conducting meetings, negotiating, etc) and their material products (such as e-mails, reports, presentations, excel files and the like) (Brown and Duguid, 1991, Jarzabkowski, 2004, Orlikowski, 2002, Orr, 1990, Van Maanen and Barley, 1982, Whittington, 2006). Therefore whenever theory meets practice, not just two but multiple worlds with different views, interests and practices, intersect and collide. This might mean there might be no clear cut boundaries between those who prevalently theorize and those who prevalently practice (Astley and Zammuto, 1992, Weick, 1999), but if we intend to better understand theory and practice it is only within the social material world that we can find their manifestations.

Theory and practice as imbricate, entwined and reciprocal

Secondly, most of the shortcomings and contradictions of the theory-practice inquiry can be overcome if both theory and practice are reconceptualised in such way as to go beyond the

pervasive theory-practice dichotomies. For instance, in an evocative study on the logics of practical rationality, Sandberg and Tsoukas, (2011) have suggested that the flow of practice can be best described by the concept of entwinement. The authors argue that to be involved in a practice is to be immersed in a meaningful nexus of activities, things, people, actions, and options already in place in given times and spaces of the social world. Entwinement thus stands for the multiple, patchy yet unifying connections between selves, others and material things as manifested in recursive patterns of interactions, human purposes and motives. To develop an entwined perspective means according to Sandberg and Tsoukas (2011) to embrace the logic of the practice world which is inherently relational, performative and teleological: it explicitly investigates what practitioners actually do, which tools they use, how they interact with others, and for what purposes. As follows I extend their perspective to the present argument but differently from them, I show that the entwinement between theory and practice can be seen as a constitutive feature of both OS academia and the practice world, of both OS theory and managerial practice.

The world of OS academia as an entwinement of theory and practice

First of all, in order to describe entwinement, it is important to reconceptualise OS academia as constituted by a unique mixture of practices and theorizing. Philosophers of science such as Kuhn (1970), Feyerabend (1987), Toulmin (1982) and sociologists of science such as Barnes, Bloor and Henry (1996), Knorr-Cetina (1981, 1999), Knorr-Cetina and Mulkay (1983), Collins (1985), Latour (1987, 2005), Lynch (1997), or Pickering (1992) have strongly questioned the objective and decontextualized nature of all scientific activity and opposed it to a view of science as practice and culture. They have made attempts to understand not only what scientists formally think but also what they do and how they create knowledge in their day to day practices, such as conducting research in the laboratory, developing scientific theories, presenting empirical findings, communicating to lay and scientific audiences and so on. They have shown that whenever theories are put in a context they assume an ‘atheoretical’ character

and become similar to the mundane interpretations and sense-making activities that are characteristic of all individuals. Just like any other knowledge, the knowledge produced by scientists -be they physicians, chemists, sociologists or literary critics- has an intrinsically social nature: it unfolds as a constant dialogue with others -such as science valuators and communities of reference- it incorporates researchers' practices -what scientists select, what they ignore, what they emphasize, what they are trained to do- relies on other scientific and non-scientific contributions –theories, words of wisdom, media representations, tools and material artefacts, etc- and is the means by which meanings, interests, identities and goals of each participant are constantly negotiated and renegotiated with respect to groups and communities of the social world (for a patchy manifest see Schatzki et al., 2001; for reviews see Golinski, 2005, Shapin, 1995).

Although scarce and sporadic, some existing contributions have already built on assumptions in sociology of science and pictured OS academia as a socio-material field of practice whose knowledge is inherently social and material. Ever since the early '80s a series of OS scholars have refused to look at OS theory as a formal body of knowledge and described OS a socially constructed discipline, whose body of knowledge is an artefact (Astley, 1985) and whose language is symbolical and metaphorical (Frost and Morgan, 1983), open-ended and context specific (Shrivastava and Mitroff, 1984, Weick, 1989). Instead of an anonymous blackbox outcome or a static category of mind, OS theory is an on-going activity of sense-making in which concepts, models, empirical evidence, are manipulated in different ways, according to the sense-making efforts of different scholars in different times and places. It is a continuous social process of theoriz*ing* that involves both mind and action and that is marked by 'interim' struggles such as guess, speculation, supposition, conjecture, proposition, hypothesis, explanation or modelling (Astley and Zammuto, 1992, Calas and Smircich, 1999, Czarniawska 1995, Hatch, 1997, Weick, 1998, 1999). From such perspective, the OS community is in turn an elaborate institutional system of differences, resistances, interests and mechanisms of control

(Alvesson et al., 2008b, Boxenbaum and Rouleau, 2011, Pondy, 1985, Zuckerman and Merton, 1971) in which multiple logics, paradigms, narrative styles or research genres collide and co-exist according to authors' efforts to establish and stabilize a social and professional identity (Astley, 1985, Czarniawska 1999, 2003, Morgan, 1980, Van Maanen, 1995, Van Maanen et al., 2007).

The view of science as practice is inherently relational since it assumes that everything that OS scholars produce –from formal theories, written papers to research practices and communication routines- constitute as a means for entering in contact with the others. For instance, Suddaby (2010) and Whetten, Felin and King (2009) have shown that the theories in OS are mostly borrowed and connected to theoretical assumptions in other fields, such as psychology and sociology; Alvesson and Sandberg (2011), Golden-Biddle, Locke and Reay (2006) and Shepherd and Sutcliffe (2011) have brought evidence about how academics build on other academics through 'gap spotting' , prior work citation or personal familiarity with existing theory. Agarwal and Hoetker (2007), Hardy, Phillips and Clegg (2001), Golden Biddle, Locke and Reay (2002) and Locke and Golden-Biddle (1997) argue that borrowed meanings and incremental contributions in OS academia do not remain the same but are translated from one work to another (eg, modified, transformed, subverted) as to accommodate new contexts and social purposes. In order to bring some contribution to this latter issue, Astley (1985) has emphasized that theorizing is an exercise of persuasion through which OS scholars try to convince other actors -be they academics, practitioners or other- of the intrinsic superiority of subjectively favoured interpretations. However, persuasion is not to be understood in absolute terms as in the interest hypothesis of critical theories, but rather as a socially constructed, on-going negotiation between different possible worlds. Persuasion is both craft and art, explanation and delight (Cornelissen, 2005, Daft, 1983, Davis, 1971, Tsoukas, 1991), and it runs both ways, from academics to other social actors and from other social actors back into the world of academia. By negotiating their interests with the ones of other social actors, academics

translate knowledge and practices back and forward, proximately and distally, across different spheres of the social world. This might lead us to believe that knowledge produced within OS academia is as much about theory as it is about practice.

Managerial practice as an action-cognition mesh

In the same way, practice does not mean only bodily acting and reacting but also thinking and reflecting. Managers not only act but also have their own theories about the way their world works (Pondy, 1983, Starbuck and Milliken, 1988, Shrivastava and Schneider, 1984, Weick, 1995). As shown previously such theories are seen as 'practical mastery', 'know how' or 'reflection in action' and are commonly distinguished from normal scientific theories that are based on 'know what' and 'reflection on action' (for a review see Reynolds and Vince, 2004). Even though some have deemed managerial practice purely phenomenological and thus unable to account for *a-posteriori* actions such as reflection on practice (see Yanow and Tsoukas, 2009), most contributions agree that thought and action, reflection on action and reflection in action are difficult to separate because they occur in a cyclical if not simultaneous manner within the practice world (Shotter, 1993, Taylor, 1993). In phenomenological terms this is described as a uninterrupted sequential alternation between 'absorbed coping' and 'breakdown' (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2011, Tsoukas, 2005, Tsoukas and Vladimirou, 2002) or between the 'performative' and the 'ostensive'(Feldman and Pentland, 2003, Garud et al., 2010). Absorbed coping or performative mode is the familiar, unreflexive and embodied relational whole in which people are absorbed during their day to day practices; breakdowns or problematizations (eg interruptions, disturbances, etc) are the events which interrupt absorbed coping and leave space to reflection, thematization or theorization which are commonly defined as ostensive knowledge frames. In other words, action and reflection are constantly alternated in the practice world. Even though theories of managers are said to be disordered, improvisational and immanently caught up in the 'here and now' of the flow of practice (Chia and Holt, 2006, Orlikowski, 1996, Weick, 1995), they also seem to be, just as OS theories, a collective patchy

action-cognition mesh (Czarniawska, 1997a, Cunliffe, 2002, Weick 1979, Weick and Roberts, 1993), that transcend context and situations, reproduce across space and time (Cook and Yanow, 1993, Starbuck, 1983, Tsoukas and Vladimirou, 2002), accumulate, transform, diffuse and lead to the creation of cultural understandings, common beliefs, shared customs, organizational symbols and rituals (for reviews on the cultural perspective see Frost et al., 1991 and recently Weber and Dacin, 2011). Therefore practice is not only performative but also reflexive; it is not just situated but also transcendental. This might lead us to believe that knowledge production in the world of management practice is as much about practicing as it is about theorizing.

Theory and practice as science and commonsense

Not only do academics and practitioners have their own practices and theorizing but each time they practice or theorize they both draw on scientific and commonsensical knowledge that they combine in unique ways. Science is not only an expert, objective, abstract, indisputably superior way of thinking in the same way in which the practice world is not exclusively lay and commonsensical. Whereas many studies focus on understanding scientific knowledge, few studies focus on commonsensical knowledge, understood as the knowledge we all have about the world in which we live and that implies making worldly distinctions, exploring objects in relation to subjects, attributing intentions and meaning to other people's actions (Schutz, 1967, Garfinkel, 1967). However, it is impossible to understand contemporary societies without looking at both scientific and commonsensical knowledge as well as at the ways in which they relate and combine in the real world. Studies in sociologies of knowledge show that in contemporary societies characterized by increased reflexivity, expert systems and knowledge-based activities science and commonsense are strongly intertwined (Beck, 1992, Bauman, 2000, Giddens, 1984, Lyotard, 1979). During their most diverse day to day activities lay practitioners and scientists enter in contact equally with theories belonging to expert systems (eg. divulgatory sciences, adjacent communities of professionals, etc) and with fragments of day to day commonsense (folk knowledge, media representations, fads and fashions, etc). As a

consequence, the scientific and the non-scientific are not distributed in exclusive ways to academics or practitioners. For instance, differently than argued by the transfer positions, practitioners are not 'amateurs' who doubtfully imitate, misunderstand and eventually distort scientific theories. Each time they act, they 'creatively destroy' both science and commonsense, so that they can build new theories and practices and make sense of their lives (Cicourel, 1990, Knor-Cetina, 1981, **2001**, Moscovici, 1976, 1984, Thrupp 1989). In the same way, scientists are no longer isolated experts whose mission is to prevent and correct commonsensical knowledge. Each time theory is passed on to other people, it is rebuilt and accommodated to the day to day understandings of the users, be they scientists or lay individuals (Farr 1993, Knorr-Cetina, 1981, Irwin and Wynne, 2004, Irwin and Michael 2003; Wynne 1992), as if science were nothing but one family of beliefs equal to any other (Feyerabend, 1987).

Although the lay-scientific interplay has been little, if any, explored in OS theory-practice debates, many contributions have more generally made reference to the loosely coupled nature of OS theory and managerial practice (Weick, 2002, Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011) and to the patchy and entrenched functions that OS academia theorizing might have in practitioners' day to day lives (Abrahamson, 1996, Jackson, 2001, Mitroff and Mason, 1982) and *vice versa*, to the influence of management practitioners on the ideas circulating in the field of OS (Barley et al., 1988, Weick, 1989). Some contributions empirically showed that there is a broad yet significant cultural exchange between OS theorizing and practitioner-based theorizing. For example, Czarniawska and Sevòn (1996, 2005) and Davis (2006) have argued about the paucity of OS theory, its constant moving beyond institutionalized theoretical frameworks and its dilution into societal knowledge. Abrahamson (1996), Clark and Salaman (2002) Davenport, Prusak and Wilson (2003) and Jackson (2001) have emphasized that expertise about management and organizations does not belong only to academia, but also to other social institutions, groups and communities such as management consultants, management gurus or divulgation press and tried to show how the voice of academia sometimes confounds and gets lost within the pluralistic

choir of voices that circulate within society. *Vice versa*, Weick (1989) has claimed that OS theories are trivial, ordinary and commonsensical and therefore highly similar to other theories that populate contemporary societies, while Barley, Meyer and Gash (1988) have empirically shown that theories of academics change over time as to reach greater convergence with the wisdom circulating in practice worlds,

All in all, these sporadic contributions indicate to the fact that OS theories might impact managers' theories in the same way in which managers' theories influence OS theories as they configure as more or less loosely coupled webs of associations about the world we inhabit (Czarniawska and Hernes, 2005). For example, drawing on a the work of Johnson (1986) about the circuit model of culture, Czarniawska and Rhodes (2006) Czarniawska-Joerges (1995) and Czarniawksa and Sevon (2006) argue that the production, circulation and consumption of management ideas constitute a loop rather than a linear process. As a consequence, ideas can come to research from management practice or the other way around, as researchers can actively promote certain practices that may become fashionable among managers. The circuit is not even closed, because inventions and inspirations can come to both theory and practice from other fields and other practices. Moreover these circular influences are not random, but reflect and shape the spirit of the times—that is, the main preoccupations and interests of people living in a given era (Czarniawska and Sevon, 1996). All in all, many ideas and practices about organizations just seem to be 'in the air': caught in the process of translation from one group to another, they cease to belong to academia or to the practice world, and become characteristic of the society as a whole.

Conclusions and directions for a renewed research agenda

This article discussed an odyssey into the study of theory-practice relation. It constituted as a meta-theoretical journey through both the manifest and the more implicit considerations that OS scholars have done about the nature and situatedness of the theory-practice relationship(s) in the

interval spanning from the institutionalization of OS as a scientific discipline and up to recent times. First of all, the work was intended as an effort of systematization. Since the theory-practice debate is often said to be full of fragmentation, contradictions and 'armchair philosophizing' (Daft and Lewin, 2008, Corley and Gioia, 2011, Jarzabkowski et al., 2010), I have struggled to identify contributions as numerous and different as possible and group them into different positions according to some of their recurrent patterns or thematas. This has in turn enabled me to trace their trajectories, their points of collision and their divergences. In particular, there seems to be an invisible line that dialectically weaves together the various positions, while showing the evolution and main turning points of the theory-practice debate. The correspondent position draws the attention to the necessity of a relation between OS theory and managerial practices and identifies a set of tools through which meanings can be communicated from the side of academia to the one of practice. The correspondence view draws the attention to the fact that meanings cannot be communicated by default, but only by finding a certain fit between the academic theories and the needs and relevance systems of practitioners. With the translation system, attention is switched from theory to practice and academics and practitioners are seen as autonomous communities which have their own practices and theories. The incommensurable position argues that the two worlds function according to irreconcilable logics, the equivalent argument instead argues that logics are equivalent although they remain different because of institutional or political reasons. By analyzing figure 1 it seems as if each argument were recurrently building on the other arguments, emphasizing aspects they have in common with some of them and reminding of pivotal differences with others (see figure 1).

Although the manifold gaps and tangles between the various positions might appear confusing, they do bring an important contribution to the way we think about theory and practice in our field. Significantly, gaps and tangles prove that rarely can theory and practice be substantially dissociated, even when they are treated inside academic debates. In order to depict the world of practice, scholars have traced its boundaries in opposition to the ones of theory and

Table 1: Literature overview. Synthesis of arguments in the theory-practice debate

	TRANSFER POSITIONS		CONSTRUCTION POSITIONS		
	CORRESPONDENT	**CONCORDANT**	**INCOMMENSURABLE**	**EQUIVALENT**	**ENTWINED**
CURRENT SITUATION	Unsatisfactory: there is a gap due to: 1. lack of rigor (evidence based view) 2.lack of awareness 3. language inappropriateness	Unsatisfactory: there is a gap due to lack of relevance and cooperation;	Neutral: theory and practice cannot be compared, it is difficult to give positive/negative evaluation	Unsatisfactory: theory and practice are the same thing, one of the two versions should be abolished in order to leave space for the other to thrive;	Neutral: theory and practice are strongly intertwined; difficult to give positive or negative value to current situation;
TYPE OF ACTORS	Two different communities (managers and academics) holding different worldviews, interests, capabilities, resource constraints and incentives;		Two autonomous, autopoietic social systems with differentiated knowledge production modes that cannot be compared;	Two communities that legitimize themselves by differentiation although they are essentially equivalent;	Multiple fragmented, patchy, multidisciplinary social, professional, occupational communities, sub-communities and social groups intertwined in complex societal networks of knowledge and socio-material practices;
NATURE OF RELATION	Knowledge transfer based; knowledge that is scientific, formal and abstract is closer to truth and has the duty to induce change to knowledge that is lay, practical, spontaneous, experience-based and unscientific;	Knowledge developed through cooperation; synchronization of different modes of knowledge production; just as in the correspondent argument	Theory is the knowledge that explains things; practice is the knowledge that gets things done; explanation vs understanding; generalization vs particularization; know what vs know how;	Action theories of practitioners vs formal theories of academics (critical theories; action theories); practices of academics versus practices of practitioners (situated theories); practice is a self-sufficient world accounting for both action and theoretical reflection;	Both scholars and academics practice and theorize; knowledge and practices are developed within a circular iterative process, in which theory and practice are combined in different ways according to contingent institutional arrangements, the material and the symbolic resources available, and the historical and cultural contexts;
DIRECTION OF RELATION	Relations are unidirectional, one of the communities impacts on the other by inducing change (correction, prediction, etc)	Relations are unidirectional, academics must bridge change, foster cooperation, take initiative, etc;	No causal relationship between theory and practice, at the most spurred correlation; everything theory teaches manager already know; not all theories can find a place in practice world;	Unclear; differentiation according to the interest hypothesis; boundaries are blurred; it is not clear at what junctures knowledge is transformed by interested groups; unclear whether the same knowledge serving different purposes is equivalent or different,	Theory and practice are intertwined; dichotomies are left behind; they are not correspondent, incommensurable nor equivalent because they are loosely coupled, dialectically related and therefore able to inform each other;
PROPOSED SOLUTION	Academics must develop more rigorous research and to commit to its diffusion and divulgation: it will lead to implementation and self-selection of best theories to suit practice	Cooperation to develop relevant theories (engaged scholarship; alliances and partnerships); invention of new synchronization modes in order to increase mutual efficiency;	No problems and no solution; worlds are either completely different either completely fused; one of them (academia) should be eliminated for sake of the good functioning of the other (practice world);		Relational scholarship; better understanding of the embeddedness; careful look at social material networks of knowledge and practices; study of multiplicity and multidisciplinarity; study of institutional arrangements, material products, and the historical and cultural contexts of theory-practice configurations;

vice versa, as to implicitly confirm, if not strengthen, the invisible link between them. It has been shown that when it comes to the relation between theory and practice the transfer and the construction arguments share a quite similar definition of rationality and draw on a long line of dichotomies that have situated, open-ended and symbolic characteristics. Accordingly, many of the arguments in the theory-practice debate in OS have been characterized by a strong tendency of reification (theory and practice as entities disconnected from the social world) and dichotomization (theory and practice as constituents of the unbridgeable gap between knowledge and action, science and commonsense, know-how and know what, the abstract and the localized) although no support was generally provided for these oppositions. However, dichotomies of the theory-practice debate are not necessarily to be seen as an anomaly of the OS field but as a pervasive characteristic of all social sciences, if not of all human reasoning at large. Frequent dichotomies have pervasively concerned arguments as different as science versus non science (Feyerabend 1984, Kuhn, 1970, Lakatos and Musgrave, 1970, Popper, 1959), the modern versus the indigenous (Agrawal, 1995, Geertz, 1983, Levi-Strauss, 1966, Levy-Bruhl and Leenhardt, 1975, Malinowski, 1948), the tacit versus the explicit (Polanyi, 1966), the declarative versus the procedural (Cicourel, 1986), the abstract versus the localized (Lave and Wenger, 1991, Mannheim, 1986), the expert versus the lay (Moscovici, 1984, Wynne, 1996), the open-ended versus the closed (Barnes et al., 1996) or the subjective versus the objective (Burrel and Morgan, 1979, Myrdal, 1969, Nagel, 1979). Most of these distinctions set theory as a prerogative of the scientific mode which is rational, principled, impartial, consistent, non-arbitrary, closed, ex post, systematic and analytical and practice as a prerogative of the social world in general which is non-scientific, local, commonsensical, holistic, inclusive, experiential, historical, open, hermeneutical and non-systematic, with the only difference that the transfer perspective has attributed superiority to the first and the constructivist perspectives to the latter (Toulmin, 1982).

The problem with dichotomies in the science-practice debate is that they have frequently divided the world into halves, so that each contribution positions in harmony with one half and in complete contrast to the other, while each additional step implies a slippage from one pole to the other and then the other way around. As a consequence, most contributions have treated either managerial practice or OS academia as fixed, but few have actually been able to look at the same time at the variations and dynamics of both communities and to consider the interests, knowledge and practices of one in function of the other. Furthermore, when applied to different contexts, dichotomies are usually justified by alimenting new sets of dichotomies that create vicious circles of argumentation (Douglas, 1986, Maybury-Lewis and Almagor, 1989). This way arguments become tautological (Garfinkel, 1981) and define dilemmas that are ontologically difficult, if not impossible, to resolve (Barley and Kunda, 1992, Leonardi and Barley,2010).

It is has been suggested that the way to advance explanations about the theory-practice debate in the field of OS is that of reconciling and integrating exiting dichotomies. Importantly, the study proposed a new position which no longer conceptualizes theory as juxtaposed to practice nor practice as juxtaposed to theory. Instead it envisaged theory and practice as a mixed language of dialogically related elements in which mind and action, the lay and the scientific, the abstract and the situated, are inherently intertwined. From such perspective, both scientific communities and practice communities draw on theoretical and practical modes to different extents, according to situation and purposes at hand.

The aim of an entwinement framework is that of investigating the existence, manifestations and configurations of socially and materially embedded theories and practices enacted by academics and practitioners as well as by any other related actors who mediate, substitute or hinder their relation. For instance concerns should be related with how theory and practice are embodied in groups and communities of individuals -such as academics, practitioners, but also other possibly related actors, such as business and education consultants, editors, reviewers, management gurus, public figures, and the like. It should study their forms and manifestations –

such as face to face interactions during conferences, business education, collaboration projects or research projects and mediated communication through articles, books, reports and other available documents. Most of all, a research agenda should be concerned with how theoretical and practical manifestations emerge from the repeated, recursive and situated interaction between any of these elements (Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011). However, the hypothesis that theory and practice are socially distributed in a pragmatic rather than exclusive manner is still to be better understood. For instance, if it is true that both OS academia and management practitioners practice and theorize, how are the practices and theorizing of one community situated with respect to the practices and theorizing of the other? Additionally, if both communities draw on expert and commonsensical knowledge each time they practice or theorize, how are configurations of lay and expert knowledge constituted? In other words, which are those aspects that constantly reinforce the distinctiveness of the two communities and allow them to remain separate? As a consequence, by answering such questions, can we abolish the distinction between the academic and the practitioner-based way of making knowledge or should we continue using it within a more comprehensive framework? Although such questions remain largely unexplored at both conceptual and empirical levels, the entwinement perspective can bring a highly significant contribution to shaping a more concrete research agenda that can burst the status quo of the field into new directions. Specifically, not only it encourages scholars to compare and contrast OS academics and management practitioners and explore the boundaries of their communities, but it can also stimulate debates about the relation between reflexivity and practice and how these are manifested culturally and materially in groups, communities, organizations or institutions.

Last, by drawing on the entwinement position, it is being suggested that whenever theory meets practice, not just two but multiple worlds with different views, interests and practices, intersect and collide.Therefore, instead of considering a single forever widening gap between theory and practice, an alternative perspective might be considered. As we have seen, there are

many gaps but also tangles within academia, as manifested, for instance, in the debate about the theory-practice relation as well as in many other debates in the field (see Burrell and Morgan, 1976, Deetz, 1996). Figure 1 exemplifies both gaps and tangles between the various positions in the debate and shows how the same elements are repeated and reinterpreted from one position to the others, while they are accommodated to purposes at hand. It might be hypothesized that a similar degree of relatedness and fragmentation characterizes also the practice worlds of managers (for studies about fragmentation and relationality in organizations see Bradburry and Lichtenstein, 2000, Tsoukas and Chia, 2002, Clegg et al., 2006, Czarniawska, 1997, Hernes, 2007, Garud et al., 2011, Osterlund and Carlile, 2005). Fragmentation and embeddedness thus can be seen as two facets of the same coin.

From this perspective, it is only by making sense of multitude and multiplicity, of loos coupling and tight coupling that one can enhance the understanding of theory and practice in the field of organization studies. If we acknowledge the hypothesis that theories and practices are largely spread and heterogeneously distributed within the social world and speak at the same time different languages to different individuals, groups, social communities with different backgrounds, interests and motivations, and that in turn these are enacted, combined, negotiated or counterposed according to contingent institutional arrangements, the material and the symbolic resources available, and the historical and cultural contexts in which the social actors are situated, then it may be that multidisciplinarity is no longer an ideal condition but rather an intrinsic feature of all social practices and social ideas that circulate within society, at the intersection between gaps and tangles. Since theory and practice are patchy, intertwined and inherently multidisciplinary, so are the so-called ‘gaps’ between their manifestations (Schultz and Hatch, 2005). The goal of OS studies should be a better understanding about the various modes in which multiplicity comes about and the forms, patterns, networks of meaning that might result from their collision. Understanding these aspects, their strengths, and their limitations should help researchers design studies that will lead to more comprehensive theories

of the relationship between OS theory and management practice. While integration may not bring resolution, it is strongly hoped that it can bring transcendence.

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PAPER 2: WHEN THE PRACTICE OF THEORIZING MEETS THE THEORIZING OF PRACTICE. SOCIAL KNOWLEDGE MAKING IN ORGANIZATION SCIENCE ACADEMIA AND MANAGERIAL COMMUNITIES

Abstract: This research inquires about the relation between theory and practice as manifested within and in between communities of Organization Science academics and management practitioners. It is the ethnographic study of an encounter between two groups of expert academics and practitioners occasioned by a one-year executive business master in an international business school. The research articulates a process view of the knowledge exchange between management academics and practitioners in particular and between individuals belonging to different communities of practice, in general, and emphasizes its dynamic, relational and transformative mechanisms. Findings show that when they are given the chance to interact, academics and practitioners set up local provisional relations that enable them to act as change intermediaries vis-a-vis each other's worlds. By engaging in multiple provisional relations in classroom, academics and practitioners brought in, negotiated and projected in the future relations in which they were engaged elsewhere; they explored interchangeably their worlds and the ones of their interlocutors, loosely coupled themselves to new sets of relations and built multiple conjoint scenarios for the future, without tying themselves irremediably to any of them. Finally, the study shows that provisional relations were accompanied by a recursive shift in knowledge modes. While interacting, academics passed from theory to practical theorizing, practitioners passed from an involved practical mode to a reflexive and quasi-theoretical one, and then, as exchanges proceeded, the other way around.

Key words: *theory-practice relation; identity process; provisional relations; change; actor-network theory;*

INTRODUCTION

The aim of the present research is to inquire about the relation between organization theory and management practice as manifested in the social world. By challenging orthodox understandings about the theory-practice relation in the field of Organization Science (OS) it points out the limitations of, and uncertainties behind, the unity and coherence of academia and practice communities, and problematizes assumptions about the isolated nature of the knowledge they produce. So far most inquiries about the theory-practice relation have revolved around the existence of a preoccupying gap between OS academia and managerial practice worlds: OS academics and practitioners animated by different and often irreconcilable interests enact different knowledge modes, practices and identities between which exchanges are often complicated, if not impossible. Empirical evidence in the present study challenge the most common assumptions of the gap perspective and underline the importance of taking a dynamic, relational and process approach to understanding the theory-practice relation. Instead of suggesting how theory can be put into practice, the study looks at the ways in which theory and practice are embodied and co-exist in the social world, how they are distributed between actors, groups and communities and with what social functions.

For this purpose I conducted an ethnographic study of two experienced communities of OS academics and management practitioners that come together and interact within a one-year executive master on the topic of technological innovation management. The study describes what happens when academics and practitioners meet in a given place and time, takes a fine grained look at their interaction strategies and points out how such strategies have triggered change on both sides.

First of all, I bring evidence to the fact that classroom exchanges between academics and practitioners were not isolated moments in time. They were strongly embedded in other exchanges that participants carried on in their day to day lives. Secondly, I show that during classroom interaction, academics and practitioners got involved in processes of social influence and identity work which, in turn, triggered change in their pre-existing knowledge, practices and identities. Specifically, I found that by setting up local provisional relations, academics and practitioners almost switched perspectives, identities and knowing modes: they explored interchangeably their worlds and the ones of others, loosely coupled themselves to the relations in which others were involved and built together manifold future scenarios, without tying themselves irremediably to any of them. Provisional involvements triggered a series of provisional temporary disinvolvements and then a series of renewed involvements with respect to pre-existing relations and this was the very mechanism through which change occurred.

The paper intends to contribute to existent literature in different ways. First of all, it intends to bring a new perspective on the theory-practice relation. It suggests to leave behind the theory-practice gap and the idea of proper transfer between clearly defined homogeneous communities of academics and practitioners and their reified outcomes. Instead it suggests that theory and practice exchanges constitute through multiple gaps and tangles between heterogeneous communities of individuals, such as academics and practitioners, their patchy socio-material practices and their transepistemic disourses. More importantly, the study offers a detailed description of the mechanisms through which knowledge and practices are exchanged between different communities in general and between academics and practitioners as exponents of two different occupational and professional communities in particular. It brings evidence to the fact that exchanges are not so much a question of negotiating differences in order to transform them

into similarities, but a subtle, continuous interaction between elements of sameness and difference, centripetal and centrifugal interests, invitations and resistances, involvements and multiplicity.

The paper is organized as follows. First, I position the study in relation to existing literature: I briefly state the assumptions of the theory-practice gap debate, point out to some implicit assumptions and discuss a series of limitations. Then I suggest how the argument might be advanced by drawing on different literatures inside and outside the field and try to connect my own position to each of them. I then describe the research setting and discuss in length the ethnographic methodology while I indicate how it has progressively projected me towards the research findings. I then describe the process of knowledge and identity exchanges in which practitioners were involved during the master, by emphasizing movement, shifts and contaminations between actors, times and places. Last, I discuss the implications of the study for both OS literature and managerial practice.

FROM GAPS TO TANGLES. MAKING SENSE OF THE THEORY-PRACTICE DEBATE IN ORGANIZATION SCIENCE

There is a strong debate in the OS field about how useful/relevant OS theories developed by academics can be for those who practice management within organizations. The notion of 'relevance' has accounted for ambiguous, even contradictory, meanings in different contexts (Augier and March, 2007, Kieser and Leiner, 2009; Nicolai and Seidl, 2010, Weick, 2002, 2003). Most frequent definitions have referred to relevance as to the ability of OS theory to 'make a difference' to those who engage day by day in the practice of management, either in terms of comprehensibility (Thomas and Tymon, 1982), interestingness (Baldridge et al., 2004) or meaningfulness (Augier and March, 2011, Corley and Gioia, 2011, Kilduff and Kelemen, 2001,

Weick, 2002). Yet many others have considered relevance in a pragmatic sense and defined it as the degree to which OS theories can fit in the day to day realities of management practitioners and address their particular needs, interests, specific problems, daily dilemmas and decision making processes (Beyer and Trice, 1982, Mohrman et al., 2001, Van de Ven and Johnson, 2006). Even more often, contributions have brought endless evidence to 'what relevance is not' and showed concern about the existence of an ever-widening gap between OS research and the world of practice. There is a lack of balance between practice and research that shifts to either research decoupled from practice or to practice uninformed by research because those who are often defined as the protagonists of the theory-practice relation -the OS scholars and the management practitioners- seem to possess different relevance systems (Pfeffer, 1993, Pfeffer and Sutton 2000, Susman and Evered, 1978, Starkey and Madan, 2001).

The theory-practice gap is thus usually attributed to the existence of two different worlds animated by different and often irreconcilable logics, incentives, interests and constraints. During their day to day activities academics are driven by internal mechanisms characteristic of the academic field (professional interests, institutionalized careers and publication mechanisms, etc) and fail to establish durable and meaningful connections with actors and communities outside academia, such as management practitioners (Hambrick, 1994, Daft and Lewin, 1990, Walsh et al., 2006, Clegg, 2002). Similarly, during their daily activities in organizations practitioners are driven by local practices propelling them towards actors which are tightly coupled to the organizational field (such as colleagues, customers, suppliers, consultants) and only seldom consider less familiar actors, such as academics, as meaningful points of reference (Campbell et al., 1982, Pfeffer and Fong, 2002). In other words, there seems to be a constant trade-off between 'centripetal' and 'centrifugal' practices in managerial and OS communities, between those

practices that direct individuals towards their reference groups, communities and social systems and those practices which drag them towards less familiar others. Such trade-off is said to contribute to the instauration of the so-called 'knowledge production gap' meaning that OS scholars and management practitioners create different types of knowledge between which exchanges are often complicated, if not impossible (Baldridge et al., 2004, Beyer and Trice, 1982, Hambrick, 1994, Shrivastava and Mitroff, 1984, Thomas and Tymon, 1982). Many attribute the unsatisfactory situation to academia (see Chia, 2005, Donaldson, 2002, Ghoshal, 2005, Leavitt, 1989, Mintzberg, 2005) which produces knowledge that is auto-referential (Corley and Gioia, 2011, Pfeffer, 1993), pseudo-scientific (Donaldson, 2002, Sandelands and Drazin, 1989), superficial (Van Maanen et al., 2007) and detached from day to day reality (Ghoshal, 2005). Accordingly, OS academics produce 'theory for theory's sake rather than theory for utility's sake' (Corley and Gioia, 2011:22), which through its "welter of misbegotten observations and inauthentic processes" (Sandelands and Drazin, 1989:458), "congealed sentences, arcane neologisms, and mind-numbing qualifications" (Van Maanen et al., 2007: 1150), creates images of the world that are 'pseudoscientific', 'unreal', 'inauthentic' or 'superficial' and have few to say about what 'actually' goes on in both academia and managerial practice worlds (Donaldson, 2002, Ghoshal, 2005). More contentiously, it has been argued that OS theories are not so much created 'for theory's sake' as they are for 'interest's sake' (Pfeffer, 2003). There is a strong connection between knowledge production in OS academia and the interests and identities of OS scholars to legitimize, differentiate, gain control with respect to the practice world or to other competing professional communities (Alvesson and Willmott, 1996, Astley, 1985, Cooper and Burrell, 1988, Clegg, 2002, Frost, 1980, Leavitt 1989, Whitley, 1984) .

Since the current unsatisfactory situation has been frequently attributed to academics, so have many of the proposed solutions. Many contributions have suggested that academia should leave behind old habits and personal interests and become more worldly (Kilduff, 2006, Tushman and O'Reilly, 2007), culturally and historically situated (Zald, 1996), creative (Bartunek et al., 2006, Huff, 2000), smart and expansive (Hitt and Smith, 2005), anticipative and visionary (Corley and Gioia, 2011), critical and un-interested (Alvesson and Deetz, 2006, Frost, 1980, Ghoshal, 2005), reflexive (Alvesson et al. 2008, Boje 1998, Cunliffe, 2002, Clegg and Hardy, 1996), pragmatic (Mintzberg, 2005), consensual (Pfeffer, 1993) or engaged and collaborative (Tranfield and Starkey, 1998, Van de Ven and Johnson, 2006) as to somehow restore contact with the 'real world' (Hambrick, 1994).

ADVANCING THE ARGUMENT: FRAGMENTATION AND THEORY-PRACTICE INTERPLAY

Despite the multiplicity of arguments raised and the heterogeneity of proposed solutions, several points have remained far from being resolved. Contributions have been surprisingly fragmented, contradictory and scarce on empirical investigations (Bartunek, 2007, 2010, Weick, 1999, 2002, 2003, Daft and Lewin, 1990, Jarzabkowski et al., 2010; Pfeffer and Sutton, 2006, Bartunek et al., 2001, Ryan et al., 2002, Shapiro et al., 2007; Van de Ven, 2007).Some have already drawn the attention to the fact that the assumptions of the gap argument have been full of reification, linearity and substantivization (Weick, 1999, Daft and Lewin, 1990, Pfeffer and Sutton, 2006, Shapiro et al., 2007), decontextualization and oversimplification (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2011, Chia 2003, Clegg and Hardy, 1996) and that proposed solutions have been idyllic if not utopian (Daft and Lewin, 2008) and have ignored important issues such as multidisciplinarity and particularism (McKelvey, 2006, Bartunek et al., 2001), creative tensions,

differences, competing forces and conflicts (Weick, 1995). Besides, although the focus should have been the relation between theory and practice, when dealing with OS theories, most contributions have treated managerial practice as fixed and *viceversa*, but few have actually been able to look at the same time at the variations and dynamics of both communities and to consider the interests, knowledge and practices of one in function of the other. Last but not least, a lot has been said about what 'ought to be' but few have actually addressed the issue of 'what is' that characterizes knowledge exchange between theory and practice in the real world, as it manifests in different moments in time, sites and through the involvement of different actors.

A CHANGING PERSPECTIVE ON THE THEORY-PRACTICE RELATION

Many studies from the field have instead pointed out that multiplicity, fragmentation and heterogeneity are pervasive characteristics of both academia and managerial worlds, although they failed to discuss what this might imply as far as the theory-practice relation is concerned. For example, it has been claimed that OS is far from being a unitary field (Augier et al., 2005, Pfeffer, 1993, Whitley, 1984). OS scholars associate into multiple research tribes (Gulati, 2007, Zammuto and Connolly, 1984) that adhere to different research paradigms (Astley and Van de ven, 1983, Burrell and Morgan, 1979, Deetz, 1996, Gioia and Pitre, 1990), use different research methodologies (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2011, Calas and Smircich, 1999, Daft, 1983, Locke and Golden-Biddle, 1997) and enact different discursive practices (Czarniawska, 1997, Phillips et al., 2001). This situation has been most frequently described as a 'Tower of Babel' (Kaghan and Phillips, 1998) rather than as a homogeneous professional field with stable core elements and well-defined boundaries.

In the same way, the idea that organizations typically form unitary and unique communities or even clear and stable sub-communities has been long ago challenged (Martin & Meyerson, 1988, Van Maanen and Barley, 1984). Organizations have been described as complex relational systems that include people, organizational units, behaviors, procedures, as well as technologies (Barley, 1986, Bechky, 2006, Feldman and Pentland, 2003, Leonardi and Barley, 2010, Orlikowski, 2002, Tsoukas and Chia, 2002, Weick, 1995). Their main feature is interrelatedness: each practitioner is positioned within sinuous interlocking of component bundles that give access to different resources, practices and stocks of knowledge within different socio-material networks (Czarniawska, 1997, 2004) to which they are bond by a multiplicity of identities and interests (Barley, 1990, Clegg et al., 2007, Hatch and Schultz, 2002, Fiol, 1991, Ibarra et al., 1993, Gioia et al., 2000, Pratt and Foreman, 2000, Schultz et al., 2012).

Furthermore, some have even suggested that despite of -or even thanks to- heterogeneity and multiplicity, members of different OS and managerial communities, or sub-communities, manage to somehow understand each other. It has been suggested that ideas and practices tend to run in and out of the OS field (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2011, Barley et al. 1988, Cannella and Paetzold, 1994, Schultz and Hatch, 1996, Daft and Lewin, 2008) and in and out of managerial communities (Abrahamson, 1996, Brown and Duguid, 2001, Czarniawska and Sevon, 1996, 2005) although few is known about how knowledge is generally created in one sub-community and appropriated or refused by other communities or sub-communities. Furthermore, evidence is lacking about those mechanisms through which gaps and tangles compete or co-exist within and between OS academics and management practitioners (Daft and Lewin, 2008).

To make matters even more complicated, one might consider, despite common conceptualizations, that theory does not exclusively belong to OS academics in the same way in

which practices are not exclusively attributable to management practitioners. Both OS academics and management practitioners practice and theorize in their daily worlds although few is known about what distinguishes and/or associates the theorizing and practicing of one with respect to the theorizing and practicing of the other. For instance, if both academics and practitioners draw on fragmented pieces of knowledge and practices linking them to fragmented groups and communities how do they manage to connect or to differentiate in the social world? And, by answering such questions, can we abolish the distinction between the academic and the practitioner-based way of making knowledge or should we continue using it within a more comprehensive framework? Since such questions remain largely unexplored at both conceptual and empirical levels, I propose a practice based, local and socially-situated, interactionist perspective on the OS theory-management practice relation that hopefully can answer some of these open question while bringing a renewed, broader conceptualization of theory and practices, as well as of the mechanisms through which they are related in the social world.

A RESEARCH IDEA AND A RESEARCH POSITION:

More recent contributions have suggested to leave behind the gap argument and open the inquiry about the theory-practice relation to a whole new set of possibilities, as follows: (1) knowledge, be it of academia or of the practice world, should be treated as process (2) actors should not be considered as holding homogeneous interests in connection with unitary groups of reference (3) multiplicity and heterogeneity should become core aspects of research designs as to render justice to the complexity of the phenomenon under study (3) the production of knowledge should be treated as a recursive dialogue, between academic theorists and reflective practitioners and (4) all of the components as well as their intersections should be studied locally, as they

unfold in contexts (Daft and Lewin, 2008, Gioia and Corley, 2011, Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2011, Tsoukas and Knudsen, 2003).

Accordingly, I have attempted to take a long step back and engage into a deeper activity of sensemaking about how academics and practitioners create and exchange knowledge, practices or interests, during their day to day lives. Instead of considering ideal-types of theory and practice I decided to give priority to hybrid social forms of theorizing and practicing as they intersect and collide in the real world, during the most mundane occasions (eg conferences, consultancy projects, business masters, etc) and tried to glimpse how similarities and differences, imbrication or separation, centripetal or centrifugal forces, if any, might manifest in concrete situations.

THE ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF A SOCIAL ENCOUNTER

Trying to make the most of the assumptions above I have conducted an ethnographic research in an international business school offering a wide range of business education, among which the Executive Master in Technology and Innovation Management (EMTIM), a one year part-time executive master that brought together two heterogeneous communities of experienced academics and practitioners and allowed them to confront their understandings about a common topic of interest, the management of technological innovation. Starting with October 2011, thirty expert professionals, with 5-10 years work experience in technical areas of large companies with strong innovation orientation (eg. automotive; electronic, ICT, energy industries), enrolled in EMTIM under company sponsorship in order to complement informal knowledge accumulated on the job with formal management education. Educators were experienced OS scholars conducting intense research and teaching activities in different areas of the broad topic of innovation management (eg, institutionalist and financial perspectives on innovation, marketing

of innovative products, people management in creative industries, innovation entrepreneurship, etc). The program unfolded over a period of 12 months in part-time format; it was articulated in residentials, e-learning, company visits, seminars and business testimonials and integrated with interactive group projects, all revolving around the theme of technological innovation management; it was conducted mostly by academic educators and integrated with seminars and testimonials of consultants and practitioners operating in the field of innovation management.

The reasons for choosing EMTIM as research context were multiple. First of all, although it has received few attention as part of the theory-practice debate, business education for management practitioners represents perhaps one of the most direct, material and continued forms of interaction between the OS academia and the practice world (Augier et al, 2005, Augier and March, 2011). Such materialized form of interaction gave me access to both OS academia and managerial communities within the same context and allowed me to observe what happened when they met. Secondly, my being situated in a liminal space at the boundary of the two communities, in turn, rendered the objects of study more salient because it emphasized the links between what was developed locally, in classroom, and what usually happened outside of it. Furthermore, the masters' focus on the topic of technological innovation management (TIM) enabled me to compare and contrast academics' and practitioners' repertoires –sets of knowledge distinctions and practices as manifested in their discourses- about a specific topic (TIM) as they were reflected in a given space and time and as they connected to other sites and life experiences (Bechky, 2006, Howard-Grenville et al, 2011, Locke, 2011, Weber and Dacin, 2011).

The data gathering process started in October 2011 and ended in month of December 2012. It consisted of more than 300 hours of participant observation to classroom activities, online platform interaction, company visits, seminars and other master-related activities. In also

included in depth, face to face semi-structured interviews (minimum 60 minutes each) and occasional unstructured ethnographical interviews with business school management and staff, EMTIM faculty and participants, as well as full access to materials and documents produced by all actors during the master. The final dataset consisted of cca 60 fully transcribed interviews with educators and participants in EMTIM, abundantly integrated with field notes, selective transcriptions of 300 hours of fully recorded classroom interaction, and a rich dataset of master-related documents, from master presentation leaflets and brochures to lecture handouts, powerpoint presentations, articles and textbooks, written assignments, projects and even learning logs that some of the participants agreed to constantly provide to researcher throughout the master.

The researcher's role was that of active participant observer (Cicourel, 1967, van Maanen, 1988). All actors were broadly informed about my intention to conduct research about executive classroom interaction and manifested awareness that my presence in classroom would have automatically turned them into research subjects. Initial reactions did not lack perplexities, embarrassment and at times hostility with respect to my hybrid, multiple positioning in the classroom, my being at the same time a colleague, a student, an academic, an intruder, or a potential evaluator. The classroom was in most cases seen as an intimate context of interrelation in which students and educators were supposed to 'tune in' without distractions or disruptions. However, through intense communication efforts and a continuous, neutral, non-invasive presence to all master activities, I managed to instill participants that my presence was guided by a genuine interest in their most mundane activities and knowledge distinctions and that my

intentions were at no time formally evaluative or judgmental.[1] (for a detailed description of the research context see appendix 1).

Most importantly, a constant presence in all masters' activities, from talking with participants during lunches or coffee breaks, to participating to classroom group works and games, from posting and answering to discussions on web platforms, to joining company visits, conferences and seminars, enabled me in few time to pass from the position of external observer to that of group member.

One of the main advantage of the research was the ability to study interaction not retrospectively, but in real time, as actors met, episodes emerged and relations changed and transformed over time (Langley, 1999, Locke, 2001). This allowed not only to have access to a richer and more reliable set of data (eg. classroom recordings) but also to see events in a way that was closer to that experienced by participants (Tsoukas and Langley, 2006). Furthermore, such continuous and at the same time multi-faceted participation mode allowed me to travel back and forth between formal classroom talks and the asides and the curses, the jokes and the irony, the questions and pieces of advice people exchanged in the meanwhile (Cicourel, 1976, Knorr-Cetina, 1983). During the year of research the classroom site has been for me like a lit-up expanse in a darkened theatre in which people, actions, entities appeared, lit up and then disappeared (Schatzki, 2005). Throughout the exercise of observation and during the coding work, I struggled to follow these sequences and worked to surface their underlying patterns and regularities.

[1] For instance, phrases such as "I want to know how you people think and talk about the management of technological innovation", "I am genuinely interested in knowing something about those who do innovation for a living" or "I am not interested in who teaches or does exam tasks better than who, I do not at least believe there are clear cut criteria to do such judgments, not to mention I do not possess them", accompanied my speeches all the time, both during more structured forms of interaction, such as interviews, and during the most occasional and unstructured ones.

THE CIRCULAR PROCESS OF INTERPRETATION

The close contact and full access to the field has privileged a grounded theory approach that enabled me to go back and forth between theories and field data and between the various methods of data collection at different points in time (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). As it often occurs, the data interrogation strategies changed during the process of coding and interpretation, from a structural approach to a relational and process-oriented one. In particular, during the first phases of open coding, I had proposed to understand differences and similarities between academics and practitioners as far as their knowledge sets are concerned, so I asked a set of research questions about the structure of OS academics and management practitioners' repertoires ('which are the most frequent distinctions, classifications, knowing strategies, empirical procedures that OS academics and management practitioners use when talking about the management of technological innovation?'), hoping to be able to finally understand what it was that distinguished academics' ways of knowing from the ones of practitioners and whether such differences had anything to do with the theory-practice relation. However, as I further immersed into coding and observations, I realized the situation was much less straightforward than sketched by my initial intentions.

First of all, I noticed that academics and practitioners' knowledge was tightly embedded with their social identities (the sense of who they were, how they positioned themselves in the social world, how they saw themselves in interactions and how they thought the others saw them). In particular, manifold incidents, events and actions insistently pointed to a set of major categories such as 'knowing', 'being', 'doing' and 'becoming' that were interconnected reiteratively: as participants acted (eg uttered and did things with others during classroom) they brought changes both to what they knew and to who they were; in addition, by 'doing' not only

they mobilized some past or present elements of their 'knowing' and 'being' careers but also shaped new trajectories of 'becoming' that in turn, determined new sets of changes in the ways in which participants acted and spoke about themselves and others. I tried to capture such reiterations not so much by enumerating process sequences or phases but by emphasizing movement, shifts and contaminations across categories (see table 1).

Table 1. Derivation of macro-categories pointing towards 'relationality' and 'transformation' (open coding)

	KNOWING ⟷	BEING ⟷	DOING ⟷	BECOMING
	(what actors know)	**(actors relate the knowledge they have to who they say they are)**	**(actors' sense of what they know and of who they are is reflected in what they do or report they are frequently doing)**	**Knowing-doing-being relations are altered during interactions and leave space to new configurations and possible scenarios)**
IN SITU (in classroom)	What actors know about technological innovation management (TIM) -the main distinctions (eg. incremental vs radical innovation, cost vs differentiation strategies, organizational vs institutional constraints, offer vs demand, internalities vs externalities, etc) -the main actors (eg, organizational actors, clients, suppliers, customers, competitors, consultants, market regulators, etc) -the main sites (eg, companies, markets, society as a whole, etc) -how the above are connected among them (dependencies, symmetries, unbalances, antinomies, correspondences, etc):	How actors position themselves in relation to other actors in the business school: - who I am (role, profession membership, experience, etc) - who the others say I am (role, profession, membership, experience, etc) - how I am positioned with respect to in situ others (my role, profession with respect to those of others, my experience as framed by the experiences of others) -eg: being a master's programme educator, student, colleague, consultant, coordinator, researcher, etc:	What actors do on a regular basis in the classroom: -making distinctions, giving examples, showing, demonstrating, synchronizing, coordinating, competing, learning, repeating, asking questions, answering, receiving answers, evaluating, explaining, doubting, criticizing, etc;	New configurations of knowing-being-doing as resulting from the interaction between actors in situ and ex-situ eg- what else I should know, how other's distinctions might be useful for me, what my interaction partners are suggesting me to do, how they suggest I should see myself, how I must mitigate who I am and who they think I am, what I know and what others suggest I should know; how what I am saying/doing now might impact on my relations with other in situ and ex situ actors; how what I am learning in situ is similar, discordant, helpful, useless with respect to what I already know and what I know the others know, how I might help others change what they know or do, how they might judge me on the basis of my new knowledge and my new memberships, how the advice and criticism of the others I am interacting with would be appreciated, received, refused, criticized by other people I know, etc.
↕				
EX-SITU (outside classroom)	How actors got to know about TIM in terms of main distinctions, actors, sites and relations: frequent references to knowledge previously learned elsewhere (during previous personal and professional experiences, prior education, personal and professional readings, projects on the job, research activities, consulting activities, etc)	How actors position themselves in relation to other actors outside the business school (work colleagues, professional peers, students, supervisors, management idols, competitors, work partners, famous people, etc): - who I am (role, profession membership, experience, etc) - who the others say I am (role, profession, membership, experience, etc) - how I am positioned with respect to ex-situ others (my role with respect to those of others, my profession with respect to those of others, my experience as framed by the experiences of others) -identities outside the classroom: being a researcher, a manager, an engineer, an intellectual, an innovator, superior, subaltern colleague, mother, husband, etc-	What actors report they are doing elsewhere on a regular basis: -making distinctions, giving examples, showing, demonstrating, synchronizing, coordinating, competing, learning, repeating, asking questions, receiving answers, dealing with news, orders or surprises, searching for information, writing up tasks, presenting results to meetings and conferences, etc); supervising the work of team members, assessing quality of others' work, assessing product quality, talking to colleagues, clients, partners, etc.	

Then, in turn, when I initiated axial coding, I became more and more aware of the importance of those relational strategies (eg. positioning, stereotyping, acting and reacting,

getting instrumentally involved, disinvolved or reinvolved, theorizing about practice and practicing theorizing, etc) through which actors connected themselves to others. Furthermore, I was surprised about the number of times actors mentioned people that were not around and I started paying attention to how often what they uttered on spot was connected to things they uttered in other moments or to utterances of other actors and about how, in addition, the same utterance changed according to addressees even at minimal intervals of time (eg, during the same lecture). It gradually resulted that the knowledge I was trying to compare and contrast had an intrinsic relational nature: it was in most occasions knowledge of someone about something and in relation to someone else. I realized therefore it might not have been sufficient to code what practitioners and academics knew, but also how their knowledge was interrelated and drew on different social groups and communities that participants considered referential. All in all, I became interested in identity and relationality as core themes of the study and such interest was not fuelled by a deductive logic but, rather, by the dominance of relational themes in my data.

Once I realized that identity was such obvious and strong theme, I searched for additional categories describing the role played by identity and relationality in the interaction between participants. During coding increasing attention was given to the triadic relation between subject who spoke social object of reference and other social actors and communities to which the speaker referred. Since there is no single methodology for doing all that, I combined the study of individuals and their subjective viewpoints with the analysis of interaction and discourses (Buchkoltz and Hall, 2005, Cicourel, 1964, Denzin, 2001, Harre et al., 1995, Potter and Wetherell, 1987, Strauss, 1997).

Last, data analysis and interpretation gradually acquired a process perspective. From the beginning the study aimed to understand how repertoires of practitioners and academics

influenced each other when participants confronted, how they were questioned, negotiated and renegotiated within the education context and with what social functions for participants. In order to answer such questions, a process perspective was adopted to capture emergence and describe change and transformations. Priorities were set to emphasize the 'how' over 'why' and 'what', and to emphasize change over order (Czarniawska, 1997, Tsoukas 1989). In other words, the research gradually became an exercise of microsociology (Cicourel, 1967, Goffman, 1961, Knorr-Cetina, 1981, 1983). In particular, contexts, contents, individuals, practices and material outcomes were labeled while paying considerable attention to their interconnections and transformations over time. Throughout the interpretation process, preference was given to the microscopic, the local, the discursive and the interconnected, as well as to those ongoing micro-processes that contributed to the constitution, transformation and reproduction of situations over time (Czarniawska, 1997, Garud and Nayyar, 2006, Pettigrew 1990, Tsoukas and Chia, 2002, Van de Ven and Poole, 2005, Weick, 1995) (see table 2).

Table 2. Coding for process arrangements. Emphasizing 'relationality' and 'transformtion' (axial coding)

MAIN CATEGORIES (process phases)		SECOND ORDER CATEGORIES	FIRST ORDER CATEGORIES
TIME DIMENSION	DYADIC WORK	Interaction between me and you (academics & practitioners, practitioners & practitioners, practitioners & consultants, program coordinators & practitioners, tutors & academics, etc)	
	BUILDING A COMMON FRAMEWORK (IN SITU)	Positioning self according to interlocutors	Self-presentation: who I am, what is my profession, memberships and roles I have occupied so far (eg. academic, manager, engineer, researcher, teacher, project manager, consultant, organizational member, etc).
			Self-attribution of expertise (knowledge): what I know with respect to who I am (eg. theories, relations and distinctions which compete me as an academic, manager, engineer, innovator, teacher, researcher, etc).
			Self-attribution of expertise (practice): what I do with respect to who I am (eg. my main thinking and operation strategies as an academic, manager, engineer, innovator, teacher, researcher, etc).
		Positioning interlocutors according to self	Information shortage: few information about interlocutos' identities, memberships and domains of expertise;
			Coping with information shortage: presumptive attribution (stereotypization of interlocutors)
			Attributing presumptive membership to interlocutors: who I think you are (eg roles, professions, memberships, etc)
			Attributing presumptive expertise to interlocutors: what I think you know and are most competent in (eg guessing about your main theories, your day to day distinctions, your operating strategies, etc)
		Operating selections to reduce distances (pragmatic adaptation)	Matching self-positions (membership, roles, knowledge, expertise) with interlocutors' positions (membership, roles, knowledge, expertise);
			Bridging differences between me and you in terms of roles, memberships and expertises: (eg, 'what I think you are expecting from me' and "what I can and cannot offer you"; "what you think you need' and 'what I think you need', 'what I think you consider valuable' and 'what I consider valuable myself'')
	ITERATIVE IN SITU-EX SITU EXCHANGES	Alimenting the creation of a Common Framework	Idem: Who I am in classroom and who I am outside the classroom, what expertise I can prove in classroom and outside of it; who I think you are in classroom and who I think you are outside of it (eg, in our day to day lives, on the job, in our fields of expertise, etc),

TIME DIMENSION	ADVANCING THE COMMON FRAMEWORK: ACTIONS AND REACTIONS	Reactions to others' stereotyping	"I am not who you think I am!"; "I don't know what you expect me to know!"; "I can't give you what you expect from me" " I don't agree with you!" "Don't jump to fast conclusions!" "Things are much more complicated than this!"
		Invitations to desterotypization	"…but I am somebody that you should know better"; " ..but I do know something that might be useful for you"; "..but I can give you something you should be interested in"; ".. but I do have an alternative vision"; so "come take a closer look!"
	ITERATIVE IN SITU-EX SITU EXCHANGES	Supporting reactions and invitations	Idem: Who I am in classroom and who I am outside the classroom, what expertise I can prove in classroom and outside of it; who I think you are in classroom and who I think you are outside of it (eg, in our day to day lives, on the job, in our fields of expertise, etc).
	THREATS TO COMMON FRAMEWORK	Increasing dyadic involvement	Accepting others' invitations: "So what you are actually trying to tell me is.." ;"So how should I see you then?";"So according to you, I am simplifying things?"; "Ok, then show me what you've got!"
		Discrepancies between multiple dyadic involvements	Facing dissonance: "You are telling me to think this way, but I am used to do the very contrary!" Comparing interlocutors' opinions with those of reference others: "I bet they wouldn't see it like you do" "This is not how we do things around here!" "How could I explain your perspective to them?" "What will they think of me if I see things like you?"
	ITERATIVE IN SITU-EX SITU EXCHANGES	Alimenting threats to Common Framework	Idem: Who I am in classroom and who I am outside the classroom, what expertise I can prove in classroom and outside of it; who I think you are in classroom and who I think you are outside of it (eg, in our day to day lives, on the job, in our fields of expertise, etc).
	COPING WITH THREATS: BUILDING A COMMON FRAMEWORK OUT OF PROVISIONAL RELATIONS	One-on-one instrumental involvement	Playing with alternative pronouns: passing from 'doing things alone' to 'doing things together": from 'I' to 'you', from 'me' to 'us';
			Increasing empathy: putting oneself into other's shoes: "I know what you mean"; "I can see your reasons"; "We see things the same way"
			Taking other's perspective (seeing life from other's perspective) "I know you usually do things like this": "I know you are used to think like that" " I know what you're trying to do when you're out there"
			Instrumentalizing involvement: using interlocutors' perspective to generate conversion to one's own perspective; keeping one foot in one's own shoes while placing the other foot in somebody else's: "..but try to hear me out, who better than me knows your situation?", "Try seeing also the unseen using my eyes!"; "Consider the parts you are usually not considering!";" You can see I know what I'm talking about, so hear me out, take my advice!": etc.
		Temporary alternative disinvolvements	Switching perspective: getting closer and closer to interlocutors, getting more and more distant from other actors ex-situ: ''you're saying something in here, they're saying quite the opposite out there.."
			Playing with alternative pronouns: passing from 'the way I/we usually do things" to "the way we are doing things in here"; shifting from 'I' or 'we' to 'him', 'her' or 'them'; placing boundaries between 'us in here' versus 'them out there';
			Questioning ex-situ involvements which are discrepant with respect to in situ involvements: "we usually think like this, but we might as well be wrong"; "my colleagues should take example from you"; "I/we have been wrong all along and it's only now I realize'; "you might be right, they don't see things the right way, I should get them to change"
			Temporariness: "we should change, at least this time"; " I should get them to change but I don't know how"; "I agree with you but they probably wouldn't"; 'if they prove you wrong, what are we left with out of all this?", etc.
		Renewed Multiple Involvements	Creating space for change: seeing things in a new way, finding space for things one did not think or do before: "building a third dimension"; "seeing the invisible"; "considering things from a renewed perspective"; "putting on a new pair of glasses to substitute old ones"; "doing the same things as before but differently"
			Testing the third dimension in situ and ex-situ: enactment of trials and errors, trying situations on and off as if they were clothes; trying to see if new elements would 'fit' old situations; making experiments with new knowledge: (eg: "Let's pretend I talked to them about this, what would they say?"; "If I asked, how would they answer?"; "If you launched the ball, would the others strike it?", etc)
			Renewing in situ and ex-situ involvements through translations: "I think I already knew these things, at least sort of.."; "We already knew, but we didn't know it"; " we can all agree but we have to put things in the right terms" "I tried to speak to them about what we're doing here, they agreed only to some extent, and so do I".
	ITERATIVE IN SITU-EX SITU EXCHANGES	Alimenting Provisional Relations	Idem: Who I am in classroom and who I am outside the classroom, what expertise I can prove in classroom and outside of it; who I think you are in classroom and who I think you are outside of it (eg, in our day to day lives, on the job, in our fields of expertise, etc).
	QUASI PERSPECTIVE SWITCH:	From Theory to Practicing Theorizing and back	Journeys of 'togetherness': constructing and deconstructing; going from finite distinctions ("this is x, this is y") to open-ended ('there is no beginning and no end to things, let's go through them together!') and dynamic processes ('things never stop, they continuously transform!") and the other way around ('lets systematically wrap-upwhat we've explored so far!")
		From Practicing to Theorizing about Practice and back	Journeys of 'togetherness': going from the tacit flow of day to day action ('it's all too complicated to explain"; "don't ask us what we're doing") to reflection ("one way to think about what we're doing is X, another way is Y"), and the other way around ('but when I step back in there X is no longer just X and why is no longer just Y", "it's all too complicated to explain")
	ITERATIVE IN SITU-EX SITU EXCHANGES	Who I am in classroom and who I am outside the classroom, what expertise I can prove in classroom and outside of it; who I think you are in classroom and who I think you are outside of it (eg, in your day to day life, on the job, in your field of expertise, etc).	

Sensitizing concepts came from a variety of sources, and followed an abductive trajectory: from data to existing literatures and the other way around, through novel associations and creative insights into both of them (Locke 2001). Main themes such as identity work and relationality led me to inquire about the role of inter-subjectivity as a constituent of knowledge

and, moreover, about the role of interactions as grids for ordering inter-subjectivities. These inquiries in turn brought me to interaction theories and to so called 'practice turn' theories which I used complementarily. In synthesis, interactionism is a theoretical perspective that derives social processes from human interaction and studies the way in which individuals make sense of their worlds through interaction with the others (Cooley, 1964, Goffman, 1959, Mead 1967). Interactionism has helped me to see that focal objects of analysis—be they self-concepts, identities, roles or practices—can be fully grasped only during interaction (principle of interactive determination) and brought me to reflect about social situations as mosaics of patterned interactions and relationships, embedded in arrays of groups, organizations, communities and institutions (Cooley, 1964, Goffman, 1961, Stryker, 1980, Snow, 2001, Strauss,1994, Stryker and Burke, 2000). Most importantly, it enabled me to come across the principle of emergence, according to which, just like a snowball effect, each interaction holds the potential for change because it triggers new sets of actions and reactions, both in selves and in interacting others. Although this last principle pointing towards social agency has been central in seminal works such as those of Mead or Cooley, it is often absent from most recent interactionist accounts (for a review see Snow, 2001). Instead useful insights about how actors interact in multiple relations and about how knowledge, social identity and actions interpenetrate relations were found in different yet somewhat related literatures, such as the actor-network theory (Latour, 1987, Callon, 1987), the sociology of science (Collins, 1985, Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984, Knorr-Cetina and Mulkay, 1983, Pickering, 1992) or the practice perspective (Schatzki, 2001, 2005), usually reunited under the umbrella of 'practice turn' theories (for a 'patchy manifest' see Schatzki, Knorr-Cetina and von Savigny, 2001, for reviews see Shapin, 1995, Golinski, 2002). Just as social interactionism, practice theories are based on the concept of relationality to which

they add new meanings such as performativity, mobility, heterogeneity and symmetry. In general practice theories are centered on a relational ontology that flattens out conventional dualisms and reconceives of agency as distributed across social and material elements (Latour, 2005). In particular I drew on actor-network theory (ANT) emphasis on relationality as extension and expansion. Accordingly, people, artifacts, institutions or organizations connect into heterogeneous action networks that always take concrete forms into the real world (Callon and Latour, 1981, Latour, 1987, Czarniawska, 2008). Interaction is thus not only of the mind but also of the body, it belongs to specific moments in times, sites and geographies (Schatzki, 2005) and entails symmetrical treatment of subjects and objects, knowledge and action, the micro and the macro (Bloor, 1991, Latour, 1987). Most importantly, I was inspired by the concept of translation understood as constant movement of all things while they pass from one context to the other, from one network to other interconnected ones, struggling to become something else than they are (Callon, 1987, Law, 1992).

Working back and forth between the chronology of events, ethnographic observations, interview themes, multiple literatures and provisional insights, I tried to make sense of what happened in and out of classroom as practitioners and academics confronted their worldviews and repertoires. Then, I tried to present research findings as if they were two streams of embedded narratives: my own and that of my research participants (see Tyler, 1986, for a description of the 'polyphonic ethnography'). As a consequence, I decided to give equal space to my observations and to the voices of the participants and I struggled to nest the two in such way that none of them would get lost in the process.

FINDINGS

First of all, I bring evidence to the fact that classroom exchanges between academics and practitioners were not isolated moments in time. They were strongly embedded in other exchanges that actors carried on in their day to day lives. Specifically, exchanges between academics and practitioners were generative and transformational precisely because they were able to connect what was going on during the master experience (in situ) with what was going on outside of it, in the multiple exchanges in which they were engaged on a regular basis (ex situ). In particular, actors enacted reciprocal, multiple, fragile, continuously changing webs of relations that I will call *provisional relations*, that helped them serve a series of personally relevant purposes such as making sense of selves and of others, handling differences and similarities, managing invitations and resistances, and most importantly, dealing with all these simultaneously, across the multiple and constantly evolving relations to which actors were called both in situ and ex situ.

Main findings indicate that when academics and practitioners meet, they enact a series of social-psychological strategies of interaction through which they make sense of their own worlds and simultaneously try to give some sense to the others, according to their purposes at hand. For instance, although when they first stepped into the classroom academics and practitioners had little knowledge of each other, the business school setting called them to collaborate with each other in a structured and continued manner so they struggled to build a common framework (in-situ relations) which would have enabled them to communicate despite differences and information shortage. In order to build a common framework, academics and practitioners initially struggled to presented themselves in ways that would have suited their interlocutors. In the same way, they tried to attribute to interlocutors a set stereotypical characteristics that would

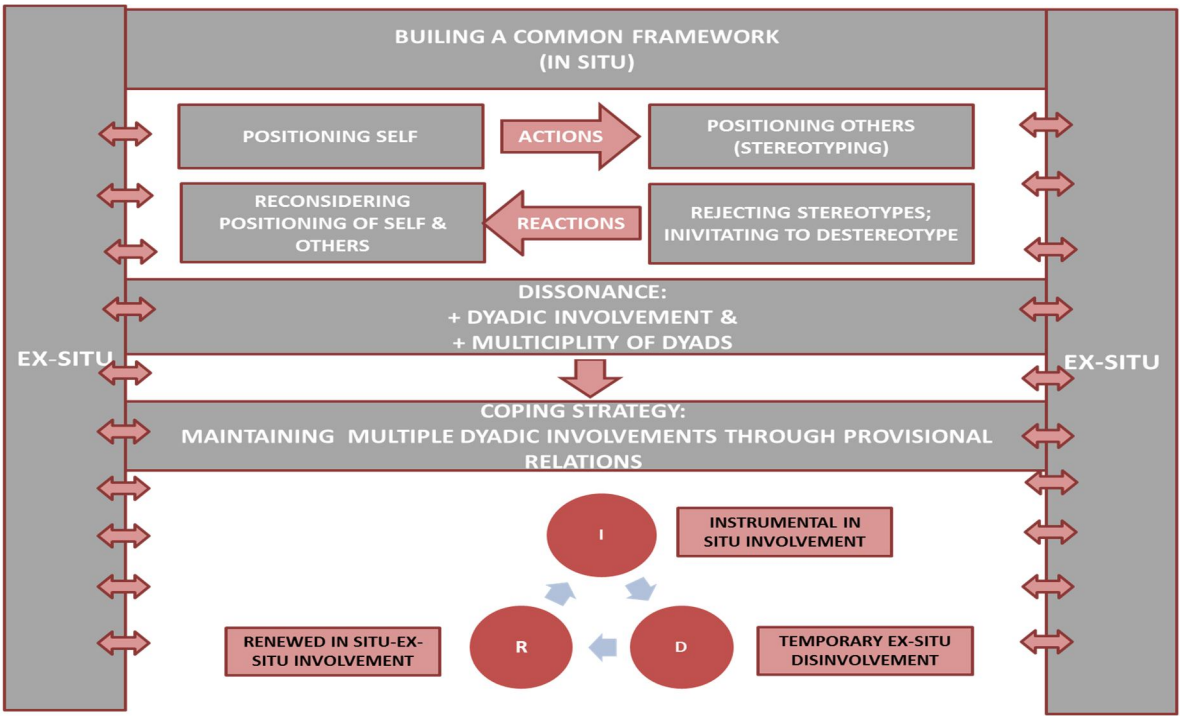
have suited themselves. For this purpose, the classroom became a liminal space where academics and practitioners constantly negotiated in situ and ex-situ knowledge and practices in order to properly position themselves with respect to one another. They presented their knowledge in ways they thought the other would have most appreciated and expected the others to do the same for them.

Yet as the interaction unfolded, each of the participants acted and reacted in dynamic ways to the invitations and stereotypes of their interlocutors. In other words, each action, caused a set of reactions that had both intended and unintended consequences. For instance, actors would frequently refuse stereotypes attributed by their interlocutors and would invite them to reconsider more carefully their position. This led over time academics and practitioners to increasingly involve in-situ, as they tried to show a less-stereotypical versions of themselves or as they tried to de-stereotype the others, upon their invitations. This seemed no easy task because each actor had to deal simultaneously with multiple exchanges, both in situ and ex-situ, many of which were constantly requiring an increasing level of dyadic involvement. Although one would have expected to find a trade-off between the two, academics and practitioners instead managed to cope in a very spontaneous way with discrepancies and similarities between in-situ and ex-situ, between the knowledge and practices of selves and the ones of multiple others, all that by means of provisional relations.

Specifically, by setting up local provisional relations, academics and practitioners managed to handle both increasing involvements and multiplicity. During interaction, academics and practitioners constantly moved their feet from their shoes to the ones of the others and the other way around. During their exchanges, both parties showed a high level of temporary flexibility and malleability: in order to involve in situ they would temporarily disinvolve ex situ; then, as

they tried to stay true to themselves and maintain pre-existing relations, they would temporarily disinvolve in situ and reinvolve ex situ.

Figure 1. Change process: translating through multiple provisional relation



The constant dance between involvements, disinvolvements and reinvolvements helped them exchange knowledge and practices with one another in highly dynamic, generative and transformational ways. Interesting, I found that during the master experience actors almost switched perspectives, identities and knowing modes: they explored interchangeably their worlds and the ones of others, built together a series of scenarios for the future, yet without necessarily tying themselves irremediably to any of them. In turn provisional relations altered pre-existing relations and tied academics and practitioners to new networks of knowledge, social identities and socio-material practices. As follows these aspects are described in length while paying attention to the phases, shifts and movements that I was able to identify in the data.

Engaging in Multiple Relations

First of all, even though they are pivotal actors, academics and practitioners are not the only parties through which the theory-practice relation manifests in business schools contexts, as they might not be so in many other contexts (see Abrahamson, 1991, Alvesson et al. 2008, Astley and Zammuto, 1992, Hardy et al. 2001). During the one year of observation, business school staff, master coordinators, tutors, organizers, consultants, management gurus and other public figures, constantly came in and out of the classroom, almost as often as academics and practitoners. Although actors varied from case to case in terms of their level of inclusion -not all actors were involved all the time, nor was their involvement uniform throughout the process- they all occupied determining places in the configuration of local relational networks. During each exchange they acted as brokers between themselves, their interaction partners and all the other local actors to which they were connected. Each of them co-produced management labels and ideas, enacted sets of practices and somehow contributed to both the consolidation and transformation of knowledge. Most importantly, through one's very own presence, each actor influenced the presence of all other actors.

Particularly, business school staff set up sustained efforts to drag different networks of actors into the business school context and locally mobilize them according to their purposes at hand. Not only they offered actors a contextual framework for interaction (eg, they carved out a physical and temporal meeting space), but instilled them with reciprocal interests- such as goals, motives, interests for interaction- and mobilized them towards pre-courses of action. For example, the master coordinator narrated this process of mobilization as a collective effort of organization:

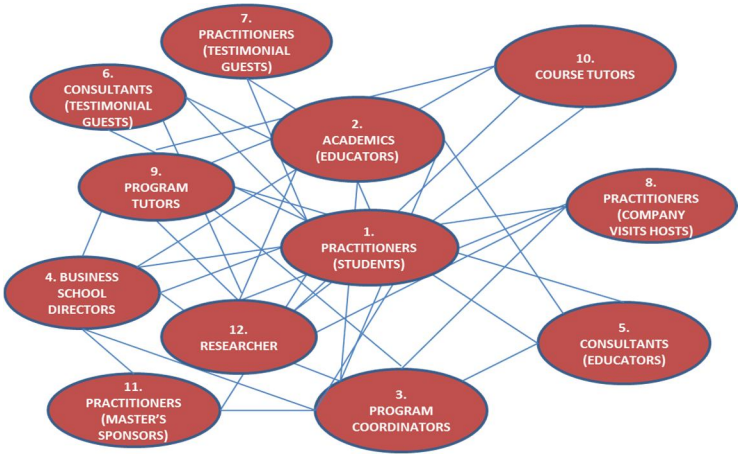
> (A): "Basically this program was born from the encounter of two sides, the offer, that is, what academics were able to offer in terms of courses and lectures, and especially the demand, the needs, desires, features of our customers. The idea came out gradually and spontaneously, as most things do, from informal encounters, such as dinners, special events, graduation ceremonies, conferences, between the director of the school and the school's network of potential clients. It emerged that most companies basically faced the same problem, they had these high potential technicians that worked in isolation, without a very good perception about what their

work meant for the others or for the company as a whole. So this is where EMTIM came in to serve those high potential individuals with a strong technical background who cover key roles inside organizations but lack the management competences to upgrade the quality of their work. So the director of the school called me and said, I'm thinking about doing this programme and I also have in mind somebody that could run it, and you know what? That someone is you (laughing) I don't exactly know why he thought of me, but I can imagine (…).All in all, I was probably the right person to put all the pieces of the puzzle together, so this is more or less what I did. First of all I said to myself, ok, there is no offer, so I might as well start building one. So I went and had a look to some of the most prestigious business schools, such as Stanford or MIT, that were offering a similar programme. I looked at how they structured courses, how they put together lectures, seminars and applied activities. But of course that couldn't have been enough, so I went on and talked to our potential clients and tried to understand their particular needs and concerns, I couldn't just take for granted that my customers were similar to the ones of other schools (…) Then I started doing all the backstage work that I do each year, I started getting people together"

In actor-network theory (ANT) words, business school staff produced concerns for otherwise uninvolved actors, prompting them to become involved (Latour, 1987, Callon, 1987). As actors mobilized, many kinds of junctions occurred in and around the business school. For instance, deans of schools gave directions to faculty about teaching requirements and mobilized program coordinators to delineate structure and faculty composition for each program. Faculty in turn drew up course proposals that they communicated to deans and program coordinators. Additionally, they negotiated requirements with program coordinators, coordinated to co-teach classes with other faculty and designed classroom activities with the help of dedicated course tutors. Moreover, they developed conjoint courses with business consultants and invited management gurus (eg, public figures, famous CEOs) and experienced practitioners to deliver testimonials. Similarly, participants' companies interacted with school deans and suggested new activities to be inserted in the educational offer, designated participants for each master edition and prompted them with a series of expectations about their participation. Participants in turn committed to constantly report about master activities inside and outside the business school, interacted with faculty, developed project works with master colleagues, received support from dedicated program tutors and exchanged points of view with other management practitioners they met during testimonials and company visits. Similarly, as a researcher, I had to ask authorizations from school management, presented myself to students and educators and

committed to periodically inform school staff, program coordinators, academics and practitioners, about the advancement of my research. As a consequence, no actor was simply member of one relation, but of many intersecting relations such as the above. Each had to manage all of the exchanges in which one was involved as well as the many social and material bits and pieces they implied (see figure 2).

Figure 2. Relations between participants in the research context



As time went by, junctions became more and more ramified and actors created multiple interaction frameworks to help them manage the increasing number of exchanges in which they were directly called.

Building Common Frameworks

As many other sporadic encounters in the social world (see Garfinkel, 1967, Goffman,1958), the business school encounter between practitioners and academics drew on few common resources. The two groups knew few about each other and had few time and motivation to prepare in advance. However, given the constant efforts of mobilization of the business school and the nature of the program in which they were involved, academics and practitioners soon realized that they had to take each other into account if they were to meet their goals. This way,

actors that previously had few connections with each other -if any- become now increasingly dependent on each other, at least temporarily.

As the master began, academics and practitioners struggled to create a common framework for classroom interaction. In doing so not only did they make the most of the few knowledge they had of each other but tried to create new juncture points between their networks and the ones of their interlocutors. This was accomplished through a series of relational strategies, such as self-positioning (actors played with one's multiple identities, practices and knowledge sets as to grow closer to interlocutors), positioning others (actors attributed presumptive, schematized and stereotypical positions to interlocutors as to bring them closer to personal interests) and juggling with in-situ-ex-situ networks of relations (actors dipped into different contexts, worlds and life situations belonging both to self and others in the search for connecting elements).

Assigning identities to self and others: The first step towards building a common ground was to define oneself according to interlocutors' interests and to consider interlocutors according to one's interests. As they stepped into the classroom, academics and practitioners enacted a series of strategies to define themselves in terms of those distinctive features-such as roles, expertise, activities, goals and interests- that mostly characterize them and tried to link such definitions to their participation in the educational setting. By positioning themselves in a distinctive manner, participants assumed a certain commitment to a category membership and took upon themselves a set of self-definitions migrating around that particular distinctive category (Hogg and Terry, 2000, Turner et al. 1987). For example, throughout the master, business schools staff and management engaged into sustained attempts of self –positioning. Through their various initiatives, a clear, persuasive and attractive image was shaped around the school's courses and, in turn, around the people lecturing them, the context and the manners in

which they were taught and the outcomes and benefits they could bring. Such image was used to mobilize different actors such as school management and faculty, companies, alumni, or professionals and was communicated with all means at hand, from fliers and brochures, to presentation events, formal ceremonies and informal encounters. Yet self-positioning simultaneously implied positioning other involved actors. Whether they advertised about the prestige of the business school, the competence of educators and lecturers, the practical utility of education, the competitive advantage of new knowledge acquisition, or just evoked the fun of going back to school, business school staff not only communicated what defined them as an institution in terms of 'vision', 'mission' and 'activities' but also suggested some sets of distinctive features and identities that aligned reference others in personally relevant ways. For example, practitioners were simultaneously framed as significant customers experiencing a high quality, satisfaction-guaranteed educational service; their companies were labelled as investors, stakeholders and valuable partners in the design of educational offers; educators in turn were described as a 'competent task force' equipped with 'extensive professional experience', 'multidisciplinary teaching resources' and 'change-triggering skills'. As a consequence, self-positioning simultaneously implied positioning other involved actors.

Stereotypical/Presumptive Positioning: During classroom actors found themselves in the position to interact with people of which they had limited knowledge. Not only they did not know each other well beforehand, but given the limited time, circumscribed space and institutional constraints of the master program, they had few opportunities to study each other before fully immerging in the vortex of classroom interaction. If from one side there was a pressing need to position oneself and start acting coherently (teaching, doing assignments, preparing classroom questions and answers), from the other side there were few available

resources for positioning others (little was known about how the others would have evaluated lectures, discourses, classroom assignments, answers and questions). As a consequence, incongruities were numerous, doubts and contradictions pervasive, and actors confronted with attributional uncertainty. The coping strategy adopted was a continuous process of presumptive positioning (stereotyping), through which actors assigned interlocutors to pre-existent schematized and institutionalized social categories. Specifically, the unfamiliar, the strange, the contradictory, the suspicious in the 'others' were quieted by assigning them favourable or unfavourable labels (stereotyping) and by extending, twisting and turning such labels as to fit local interactions.

For instance, each time they began a new class, academics had to make a series of assumptions about those ideas, thoughts, intentions, and necessities that they thought characterized their audience the most.

> (A): "Ok, so what can I do for a practitioner? Pretend I am an R&D developer, a product manager or a quality responsible, and spend all my time working in between the office and the lab, together with other few people that I know. What do I know? I probably know a lot of things. However, I don't really know, nor am I used to ask about what goes on elsewhere in the company, I don't have the tools to do that. I might know which are the objectives that the company is trying to reach, but I don't know much about the mechanisms that get an organization going. And this is where this course comes in, this is where I come in.."

At the same time, they regulated their own presentations in function of their presumptions:

> (A): "I guess we academics deal with different matters than practitioners during our daily lives, they act more than they think because they have to deal with the contingent; they don't reason in terms of ideal types nor spend their days thinking about the different shades of grey on each facet of each little thing out there; they are more into problem solving, and this in turn requires a different approach…more..doing-oriented. I don't mean they don't think, they just have less knowledge to play with. If I think about my publications, I realize academia's organization is such that it constrains us to reflect on each and every phrase we write and this is different from what other people, such as practitioners or consultants, are forced to do. Practitioners deal with problem solving and rely on personal experiences, we build abstract inquiries and rely on inferences; this in turn is our distinctive feature as well as our major strength."

As they started interacting with practitioners, academics defined themselves as sensemakers and scrutinizers, brokers and converters. Their mission was to bring in the unfamiliar, the entangled and the distant in practitioners' worlds; their explicit offer was often not that of

solving, finding or transferring solutions, but that of bringing awareness, stimulating reflections and triggering connections between different dimensions –such as problems, critical situations- usually perceived as separate.

(A): "If I had to think of a valuable aspect of being an academic, I would choose our being cultural mediators with respect to the people around us. If I'm not able to study things, reflect on them and then translate them into the lives of other people, then I might be, I don't know, a brilliant, well read, consultant, but I'm definitely not an academic (…). You might find me a little intellectually snobbish, but I like to help people think in a more complicated way instead of a simplified one. It might be that the people in this class have more knowledge and skills than I do, so why insult their intelligence with pre-fabricated inquiries?"

Their purpose, different from those of all other business school-related actors, was to instil practitioners a new knowing mode that would have challenged the old one: from an involved, taken for granted and highly personal to a more abstract and strategic one.

(A): "Personally I am not able to understand the benefits that education done by consultants can have on practitioners. They get to hear one more story, yes, but not so different from the ones they already hear every day. The role of education is confrontation, reconversion, it must show you interesting things and blow you away, at least in some way The way I see it education is an appointment with novelty, or at least a chance to go through old stories using a novel key.."

The process of social interaction that went on during the master was accompanied at all times by an interwoven process of knowledge negotiation. While assigning labels and positions to selves and others, actors operated 'selections' or 'customizations' of their knowledge and of the way they presented it to audiences. For example, it was highly frequent of academics to set up joint lectures with consultants or practitioners that they considered particularly experts in the topic at hand. Let's take for instance the introduction that an academic made to a practitioner whom he had invited to deliver a testimonial in his class.

(A): "I am theory and he is practice, I try to observe, compare, contrast and possibly bring some minimally interesting insight, he is the one that gets things done; I heard him speaking once in a conference and realized we had surprisingly many things in common despite our different professions and orientations (…) so I decided to introduce him to you. I kindly asked him to come here today and deliver a lecture based on his direct experience with the internationalization of innovative projects […]. I'm not doing joint classes because I am supposed to, I'm doing them because they matter. Otherwise my words would risk to turn into mere chatting and my act into a farse".

In order to position himself in a coherent and authentic manner with respect to interlocutors, the educator considered in turn his relation with each of the actors involved: the business school staff and their expectations, the guest he was about to introduce, the audience he addressed. As he uttered he connected all the involved actors, negotiated his positioning with respect to each of them and adjusted positions in order to make them fit together. Furthermore, he presumptively attributed a set of distinctive features to himself and others, about what he knew and what the guest knew and about what each could do to advance practitioners' knowledge. Then he made a series of concrete choices about what to teach in classroom:

(A): "So I decided that first I leave the stage to those who can talk about these things from experience. If instead I had exposed my theories without any testimonial, practitioners might have legitimately asked me, ok that's interesting, but how many companies do it? Instead this way I gave them the walking proof. I think my knowledge and that of practitioners is quite complementary: they lack the frame, I lack what's inside of it. If we get together we might just be able to do a fine painting"

In a similar manner, another academic explained how positioning audiences inevitably determined the knowledge he was bringing in the classroom:

"these are company people, no matter how interested they are to learn new things while they are in the classroom, the moment they step outside they are undoubtedly subjected to social conformism, they go back to their desks, open their e-mails and get stuck in work again. Since I know that I try to give them the most I can in classroom, it is there I can make a difference. Then, if I'm able to send them a clear message, maybe while they're answering their e-mails and talking on their phones they will stop for a moment and say, hey, maybe I can do things differently!"

Since actors had few direct feedback about what the others expected of them, they overemphasized those elements they believed might have produced positive outcomes and, at the same time, tried to minimalize or exclude those parts that others might have perceived negatively (eg, as too complicated, commonsensical, uninteresting, boring, useless or redundant). In ANT words, each actor decided to present one's own ex situ networks in ways which they thought would have increased in situ connectivity. As a consequence, some of the ex-situ equilibriums were inevitably broken: categories were torn apart in order to leave space to new ones and in situ positions gained footing over some of the ex situ.

(A): “I could talk to them about a million of things, and I could go into the details of each of the things I included in my slides. But I always ask myself, does it make any sense? Is there a common background? Will they understand that I’m saying? And if there isn’t, do I try to build it anew or do I talk about something else? It depends on the case, but generally I try to leave aside personal interests as much as possible and stay relevant to people. To make matters worse, I know that what is fully understandable for one of them is completely inaccessible to another, this is the great challenge we face as educators, we must stabilize our discourses at a level they may all understand”

In the same way, as they stepped in the master setting practitioners showed clear ideas about who they were and a whole set of interests and goals about what the master experience should have meant to them. They primarily defined themselves as members of the organizations in which they operated and described ‘who they were’ and ‘what they did’ in terms of roles, missions and activities carried out in their organizations. In particular, by making continuous reference to the complex, unstandardized, time pressing and innovative tasks they usually dealt with in organizations, practitioners expressed their primary concern about finding in academics valuable allies for their daily struggles:

(P): “Let’s say we invest in this new technology called RVM, what does it mean? How much can you invest? How risky is the investment? When is it that you have to stop? When is it that you must insist and which are the market signs telling you are going in the right direction? As a company man, I know a lot of things, but in my day to day life this is usually a leap in the dark: one more step and you don’t know where you end up. What I expect from this master is precisely this, to give me some parameters that can tell me, look, when you are in this situation, normally you must do this kind of analysis, you must act this or the other way, and you’ll be all right”

Concomitantly, as they defined themselves, they assigned stereotypical labels to academics and other business school-related actors:

(A): “What can I say about academics? I still haven’t figured them out completely. Are they omniscient? No, of course not, their merit lies in the time and effort they spend to meditate about things. They are very good in putting things together and then dissecting them longitudinally and cross-sectionally. Differently from them, we don’t have all this time and resources so I appreciate their distinctiveness quite a lot. Still, sometimes I get the feeling they just won’t come down and talk to us in normal ways. I mean, sometimes they seem locked up in their ivory towers from which it’s difficult to look down and see that in 99% of the cases reality is neither black nor white, but rather grey. When I think about academics I see them as.. vague, yes, that’s the term. Either just like us they really don’t know the answers, or maybe they want to make us reason with our own heads. I tend to incline towards the second hypothesis, although sometimes they get me pretty confused”

However, they too avoided entering in the details of those personal experiences they feared potentially irrelevant for their interlocutors. Instead, they tried to formalize personal knowledge

and strip it from personal relevance systems, as to make it 'fit in' the master context where people generally talked in 'more abstract' or 'strategic' terms:

> (P): "I don't wanna get into the mess we as a company are dealing with right now, I wouldn't at least know how to explain it, so I'd rather tell you how I see technological innovation in general or, even better, how we would frame it in this class. To me innovation is a function of operators' freedom of action; by operators I mean technology specialists that prevalently deal with developing innovation..uhm, additionally, it is a function of the rules, norms and constraints of each organization. Therefore, if we imagine a two-coordinate graphic,..uhm, innovation would lie in between innovators, defined as those who would like to use skills and initiative to move freely in order to innovate, on the x coordinate, and the contractual and structural constrains of the organizations in which they operate, on the y coordinate".

Just like academics, practitioners thus distinguished between their way of knowing things and the ones of the others, but oppositely from them, they saw their own mode as characterized by disorder, heterogeneity and chaos, and hoped to find order and structuration in the latter.

Connecting In Situ with Ex-situ Relations

As showed above, when academics and practitioners met in the master context, multiple positions were triggered for both selves and the others in each of the exchanges in which they were engaged. Their expectations of others were multiple and so were the perceived expectations that others had of them. In order to make sense of these multiple expectations, actors struggled to create a common ground for communication. While they communicated, their utterances were never neutral, but always of someone, about something and in relation to somebody else and this was the very mechanism by which they managed to establish a common ground and talk to each other. However such common ground was not generated anew but by translation of already existing knowledge and practices (ex situ) towards the knowledge and practices produced in classroom (in situ). Throughout classroom interaction, academics and practitioners tried to establish bridges between themselves and their interlocutors by bringing in those ex situ knowledge and practices that they thought would have been highly appreciated by their interlocutors and, at the same time they inferred about those ex-situ knowledge, practices and

identities that were highly typical of their interlocutors' ex-situ relations and tried to use them to turn them in their favor.

Notably, positioning of self and others was not one, but multiple and took place by means of multiple dyadic relations. While interacting academics and practitioners saw each other as constituents of dyadic relations of sameness (their being 'on the same side') or difference (their being on 'different yet complementary sides'). For instance, according to situations, academics were management experts who engaged in knowledge exchanges with technological experts; scholars addressing the practical concerns of industrial innovators; reflexive professionals confronting with other reflexive professionals, responsive teachers accommodating the needs of adult students, business school consultants trying to slow down the pace of 'frenetic managers' in search of 'immediately applicable solutions' or 'qualitative thinkers' aiming to show a different world to 'SciTech nerds' obsessively in search of 'hard facts' and 'fully quantifiable scientific findings'. At the same time, practitioners dyadically positioned as 'amateurial meaning scouts' asking for 'walkable maps' from 'those who did meaning scouting for a living', pragmatic managers trying to pull out 'quixotic academics' from their 'ivory towers' or involved craftsmen in search of 'solid' 'consolidated' toolkits that would fix their day to day quandaries. Research contexts, publication practices, company offices, laboratory work, company norms and practices, scholarly journals, peer reviewers, faculty colleagues, students, co-workers and bosses, were brought in interchangeably by both parts. For instance, in setting up classes and lectures, academics extended practices and discourses already carried out elsewhere (during previous lessons, in conversations with colleagues, etc), and recycled materials previously used for other purposes (undergraduate course textbooks, research papers, conference presentations, etc). At the same time, they drew on other professional experiences, such as consulting for companies and

public institutions, as well as on their most variegated personal experiences, from going on a trip or reading a newspaper to moving into a new house.

(A): "You know, I think I understand them quite well because my husband too is a manager, I've seen the problems he faces, the questions he asks himself, and this helps me. Remember the example I made in class about our moving into the new house? It came into my mind on the spot and I remember I said to myself, that's such a business people situation, I must remember to use it sometime!"

Similarly, practitioners drew on practices and discourses already carried on elsewhere (such as problem solving practices acquired on the job, past classroom experience, team management experiences, etc), either during professional lives (lab work, meetings, R&D related activities, etc) or throughout their most variegated personal experiences (eg, travelling or playing sports, surfing on the internet or reading psychology books).

(P): "You might think this is strange, but I always go looking around for innovative ideas, while I watch tv, read the newspaper, or go to work, and I write them down in a sort of secret notebook, I say to myself, hey, who knows, maybe one day I will do something big…now that I'm doing this master, I don't know why, but I happen to think about these ideas even more frequently, while the professors talk, I try to translate what they're saying into my notebook ideas, and ask myself, how would that sound? .."

Therefore initially situ and ex situ elements were used by academics and practitioners to make sense of each other and build some shared understanding. As interaction sequences unfolded so did the purposes of the participants. However, the in situ-ex situ interplay was a recurrent and persistent mechanism that continued to inform the interaction between practitioners and academics throughout the master, but did so in dynamic ways, according to the shifts of participants from one purpose at hand to the other.

Actions and Reactions: Multiplicity and Requests of Increased Involvement

As shown so far, the master interaction was set up thanks to the strong intentions of all involved actors to establish a common framework that would have reduced distances, avoided misunderstandings and enabled local communication. However, the fact that actors were positioned within intersected multiple social networks and dealt at the same time with multiple

knowledge exchanges had paramount implications for how classroom interaction unfolded. Interestingly, I found that simultaneous involvement in multiple relations gave rise to a set of unintended consequences, which, from one side interfered with actors' initial intentions of normalization, and from the other side propelled classroom interaction to a new stage. As interactions unfolded, each of participants' actions determined a new reaction and an associated set of adjustments and readjustments. For instance, actors often refused some of the stereotypes and imputations they were attributed by interlocutors:

(A): "Don't ask me what will happen next, I know you might want to, but please take into considerations that we are scientists and not fortune tellers. Our publications should be read in the key of understanding better reality by unfolding potential scenarios, and not so much in the key of finding prophecies for the future!"
(P): "So what should we do then, you're saying there's no solution?"
(A): "If of all people you ask me such a thing, then you obviously don't know me at all! You see, I don't believe in pre-determined solutions, it is not in my nature nor in my profession to do so, the only reason why our work cannot be substituted by that of technological artifacts is that luckily we have the capacity to use our own minds and reason according to situations"

And then during an interview, the academic explained his position better:

(A): "Some people like to believe in management recipes that are good for all seasons, instead I believe we are decision makers in complex situations and must assume the responsibility to act, think and make decisions on our own. This thing is twice as true if we consider we are dealing with a highly complex topic such as innovation management. I know people want certainties, I know they ask for tools, and maybe If I really thought it had any sense giving them, I might even be able to do so, but the thing is it doesn't help them, once they go back to work they won't know what to do with my recipes"

While refusing others' imputations, actors thus defined personal situations as 'everything but typical': their day to day worlds were hybrid, highly complex, difficult to understand also by those who lived them from the inside, not to mention by those who saw things from the 'outside':

(P): "In classroom professors frequently tell us we must open our eyes and see things from a different point of view, but I believe that somehow we already do, I mean, all the distinctions they use, the incremental and the radical, the price and differentiation strategies, the market or non-market driven, I just think they are oversymplistic Take for example, the distinction they were doing the other day between mission and vision, I honestly don't logically see all that difference.. I have in my mind endless situations in which the two are not separable at all, if we sat down and talked about them, I doubt they could justify them!From my experience things are more complicated then this, I can assure!"

At the same time, by reactively describing the specificities of their day to day worlds participants invited interlocutors to step into their shoes and engage into a better understanding of their worlds. They invited them to come and see things 'from the inside'. Interlocutors, in turn, often had to react to invitations by taking a new position. This way, interaction was taken to another level. Each action had to account for reactions and each positioning had to account for other's requests of re-positioning. For example, an academic's reflection on his interaction with masters' participants reflects quite well this process of negotiations between self and others:

> (A): "Usually it goes like this, I think I've learned it already, if they don't get the certainty they are looking for, they might interrupt the relationship on spot. Because they want to receive what they ask for, period. However, other times, if you're lucky, you get to spend some time with them and show them why you won't give them what they want. If you get them to trust you it is only because they acknowledged your authority based on your deep knowledge of the argument. But that isn't always so easy to do.."

As they passed from one context to another and from 'doing it alone' to 'doing it together' actors got more and more caught up in others' worlds. This way, initial strategies became insufficient for keeping pace with classroom dynamics and new interaction strategies emerged. If from one side, actors faced the challenging task of dealing with increasing involvement in each relation; from the other side they had to keep pace with the multiplicity and dynamicity of all interaction flows in which they were immersed. In order to mitigate between the two actors chose to set up queues of provisional relations, as follows.

Identity Work through Provisional Selves

I found that each time participants thought they were facing the risk of relational breakdown, they extended themselves into the worlds of the others as to fuel relations with new elements, yet without tying themselves exclusively to any particular relation.They did so with the help of provisional self-extensions that allowed to deal with multiple relations and multiple involvements simultaneously. I found that during the master actors extended selves not in one

but in myriads of ways, as to serve local purposes of interaction, but always in open, partial, non-definitive ways. By going through 'involvement–disinvolvement- reinvolvement' loops, actors jumped from one relation to another, from ex situ to in situ positions and the other way around. Multiple fragile self-extensions served as interstices that tied fragments into coherent wholes, and at the same time, assisted actors in shifting from one fragment to the other. Most importantly, self-extensions enabled to pass from actual situations to possible future scenarios and triggered change mechanisms. As follows, I describe the reiterative process through which provisional relations were enacted, from participants' strategies of one-on-one instrumental involvement, to their alternative disinvolvements and up to their renewed multiple involvements.

One-on-one instrumental involvement: As shown above, each time actors wanted to take a discussion further, to a new state, they had to get involved in the reactions and invitations of their interlocutors. This required building in each exchange a certain degree of relational involvement in terms of both empathy -trying to put oneself in the other's shoes- and perspective taking -seeing life from other's perspective, as they thought the other saw it (Batson, 1991, Mead, 1964, Rommetveit, 1980).

During classroom observation I was surprised to see how much participants struggled to show their interlocutors that they possessed a good knowledge of their worlds and that they were able to understand their most personal situations, from daily problems, persistent dilemmas or mundane routines to their frequent goals or most hidden ambitions:

(A): "It is common practice for us to think about our direct clients and about the most immediate aspects of our jobs. But we must try harder than that! We must think about all those aspects apparently distant from us but in reality so close to our positions as market players. What I'm trying to say is that, I'm used to looking at my main competitors, the ones I've been monitoring for years and that in turn, might be monitoring me as we speak; I go to see what they did lately, what they didn't do.. but the real problem is not here, where I always thought it were and where I always looked for it, the real challenge is to go a bit further and try to understand where potential sources of innovation might come from, are you following me?"

As they got to know better their interlocutors, participants eroded their detached positions and started talking, walking and thinking in ways they deemed characteristic of their interlocutors. By using others' distinctions, conceptual categories, reasoning schemes, tone of voice or speech rhythm actors tried incessantly to become in-group. Such attempts led in turn to the de-stereotypization of relations, as opposed to their initial stereotypization.

Furthermore, actors usually did not pass to the other side in order to gratuitously comprehend others' subjectivity and take it upon themselves. Their efforts were strongly instrumental: they tried to use their knowledge of the others as to insert themselves (eg their goals, interest, points of views) into their worlds. For example, if the purpose of academics was generally to get practitioners to 'think, speak and act like academics' they first had to learn how to 'think, speak and act like practitioners' themselves and only afterwards try to generate a conversion from within:

> (A): "Another thing you must realize is that companies are like frogs. Only the paranoids survive. If you say, I'm perfectly fine as I am just because I'm doing a lot of profit, then you're finished. If you don't see it important today, you might come off guard. Do you understand what I'm trying to do here? I am framing and deframing; I am trying to show you that yours is just one way. You think of the world of being very objective, I imagine, well, for entrepreneurs things are different, they have to be different. They think in a different manner; for them the world is not given, it is made. So this is the world, I start putting my frame on it, you start putting yours, then other persons come in and put theirs, and this way we cut our reality to pieces according to our different points of view"

Academics struggled to instil practitioners their own vision of the world and make it 'get through' as if it were their own. Their distinctive position with respect to practitioners consisted in their ability to 'think deeply about things', 'reason reflectively' and travel between different situations, times and spaces, by means of 'inference', 'abstractization' and 'strategic thinking'. Practitioners, in turn, refused to accept that they didn't understand reality well enough, and tried to get academics 'with their feet on the ground'. In doing so they opposed their own vision of a hybrid world built out of personal experiences, reflections and empirical observations; they drew

up maps, showed videos, told stories about people they knew, supported or criticized interlocutors, all that with a careful eye to how the others reacted. Throughout, exchange dynamics appeared as a subtle yet constant oscillation between understanding the other and making oneself understood. It results then that actors did not walk in others' shoes, instead they kept one foot in their own shoes and placed the other foot in somebody else's. Not only such mechanism allowed them to save time and resources but preserved the capacity to remain somehow separate from interlocutors, while engaging simultaneously in multiple relations, such as those with work mates, academic colleagues, master coordinators, other students, course tutors and so on.

Disinvesting from alternative involvements, switching perspectives: However, ironically, what was arduously defended against others was at the same time singularly questioned. By taking the perspective of the others and trying to carry arguments from within, both academics and practitioners gradually started talking about the shortcomings of their own worlds. Furthermore, by drawing on classroom insights, they proposed solutions and remedies as to how such problems might be addressed.

For instance, as they interacted with academics, practitioners started to emphasize those issues that they had never agreed, approved or fully understood about their companies or their day to day activities:

(P): "When you step inside the company, you forget what you do in your normal daily life, but when you get our for a moment and finally find the time to reflect you ask yourself, damned, if I must implement a research system inside our company and in my private life I use Google all the time, how come it doesn't come into my mind at least for a second to implement a Google-like tool? Must I take my car and drive for two hours to get into a master classroom in order to come up with this idea? Sounds pretty ironic, doesn't it?"

(P): "Theoretically we are all innovators, but practically we're just working people, we do the same things every day and in the end we get so used to them that we're no longer able to do something new. Maybe professors are right to insist so much on this incremental innovation issue, ever since I've worked in this company, I've always seen things done in the same way, always, so how is one supposed to deal with routines and keep the mind fresh? I don't know, but I'm on guard, I don't want to become like that, or, maybe I'm already like that, probably within some years a new Samsung product will come out and I will say to myself, it was all so obvious, I could have done that myself long ago, but it just didn't come to my mind."

In the same way, as they attempted to get closer to their classroom interlocutors, academics criticized the academic world and differentiated from its stereotypes. For example, they distinguished in turn from the figure of the useless researcher who studies things for the sake of study and pictured themselves as 'men of the world'; other times they criticized existing academia theories by pointing out their limits and shortcomings as if they had been directly addressing their authors:

> (A): "Many of my operations colleagues spent their lives studying the alternative ways in which production men can save 10% of a second to render the production more efficient, I mean, sometimes I feel like telling them, common! They analyze egg yolks all day, but can't tell the difference between an ostrich and a chicken egg? What I'm saying is that they go around chasing for details, but forget what the real world is all about, they should take more example from you and from the questions you ask yourselves all the time…"

As interaction unfolded, it almost seemed as if academics and practitioners were gradually switching perspectives. During their mutual involvement attempts, they promoted interests in their own objectives, dismantled others' resistances and inspired them trust by evoking similarity. This way, new points of view were gradually instilled, and both academics and practitioners discovered alternatives to the worlds they used to know.

Renewed investments: creating the 'third dimension': As they transitioned from one position to the other, actors simultaneously reshaped connections with different networks: from one side, they forged new, tighter connections with actors and groups in situ, from the other side, they problematized and sometimes diluted some of their strongest ex situ ties. However, by involving in one part and disinvolving in another, actors created new spaces for reinvolvement both within in situ and ex situ relations. It seemed as if while moving from ex situ to in situ relations and the other way around actors sometimes managed the doubts and imputations casted upon them by interlocutors and other times struggled with doubts and imputations of their own property. In all cases situational queues triggered renewed involvement both in situ and ex situ: local interests built order and continuity out of different settings to which actors participated and

linked them to possible alternative settings to which they might participate in the future. This was the very mechanism through which knowledge and practice were *translated*: they moved from one relation to the other with the purpose of *becoming something else* than they were previously.

For instance, the more academics and practitioners engaged in classroom interaction the more they began exploring alternative scenarios of becoming. Each time they defined what things were and clearly distinguished them from what they were not, actors simultaneously drew paths about what things might become. Even if they initially exchanged perspectives out of self-interest, by acting together academics and practitioners conduced and let themselves be conducted on new paths; they unavoidably got a sense of how it felt to be in each other's shoes and tried cross-looking at the world through some of the lenses they recommended each other. This way, as both parties narrate, 'the unseen was rendered a little more visible' and the 'un-thought before became a little more thinkable" (cf). This in turn projected them in a new dimension they all frequently referred to as 'the third dimension':

(P): "This is for me a journey of discovery. There was a philosopher, right now I don't remember exactly who, Kant perhaps, who spoke in one of his writings of an ant that would see the world in two dimensions: the ant continuously walked on a plane but when it got close to an edge it would turn around and go back. And the philosopher was saying, if only the ant could have turned its head up, it would have been able to go beyond the edge and climb the wall, discovering a third dimension"

(A): "This message has been chosen a-priori to position in the marketplace, but it is something these guys are building every day. Therefore ask yourselves if you are building everyday what you have chosen to be. If you do wrong, you will find yourselves competing against those you less expect. The important thing is you already have all the necessary data in your companies to look into that. You might not know you have them and you might not know where to find them, but you do have them and it is paramount to learn to look at them and try to understand what is going on. If you do that you'll be acting in a new dimension".

As exchanges went on, the idea of transformation became more and more defined, even though neither academics nor practitioners could say which transformations they underwent or in which particular moments this happened. Instead translations were

sometimes described as a sort of temporary permeable contagion and other times as a more vivid, durable and reinforced perception of reality:

(P): "In the beginning I found it strange that academics almost never closed their speeches in a concrete way; instead they left them open, even too much, never giving the right answers, never telling us which way to go, it was a little awkward. For example consultants do the opposite all the time, even too much, I'd say. They think people like us always need someone to tell them what to do, you can't imagine how many times I heard them saying, in this situations, given these characteristics, if you want to obtain Y you have to do X.. instead academics don't do this so often. In the beginning it seemed really strange to me, I was like, ok, what you're telling me is interesting, but, what am I left with? However, in time I started seeing what they were trying to do. It's true, after all, they don't generalize so much because they want to show us a wide range of possible alternatives, different from the ones we're used to see. For example, my colleagues, my boss or the consultants working with us on different projects, are quite the opposite, but I guess that's good, they sort of complement each other, one of them launches the ball in the air and the other one strikes it"

Therefore by acting together, academics and practitioners co-designed a new dimension in which things that difficultly fit pre-existing situations, were given the possibility to develop or come into existence. Such new dimension gradually materialized as actors created innovative, open-ended and dynamic associations -between selves and others, between ex situ and in situ, between past, present and future moments.

(A): "This experience has helped me a lot. I've talked to people, asked for their feedback, helped them in solving their problems and got to understand them better. Besides, I've been on so many company visits that I've actually seen some of my students at work. For instance, in my undergrad classes I always teach about prototyping, of course I already know for years what prototyping is about.. I studied it in university, then looked for it in textbooks, so I could speak about it to students without particular problems.. but after I went in the company and saw exactly how it worked, how the model was built, how the.. uhm..layers alternated, put together, I guess something changed. Now I teach the same things as before but I say them differently... in a more convinced way, I think. You know, it never happens to me to receive questions I cannot answer, I mean, I always answer although I too have many question marks inside my head. Seeing things with your own eyes, or better, seeing things through their eyes, gives you a kind of mastery..not only it gives you a sense of security but also the confidence that you can make managers trust you.."

In particular, I found that the main mechanism through which the third dimension was built was by means of trials and errors: actors tried things on and off, put them to the test, as if they were objects, and allocated them to different provisional configurations, as if they were trying to figure out if they would hold in similar situations, or, in their own terms, if once they launched the ball in the air, somebody would have actually striked it:

(P): "(…) and then there's another thing, perhaps I have a brilliant, disruptive idea, but in order to make it work, I have to insert it in the company. Unfortunately the problem with big and highly structured companies

is that they have a history, and because of that history they end up always doing the same things. If, for instance, someone's got an innovative idea, it's very likely he'll be told, no, forget about it, I don't think that could actually work; for example, me and my team had this idea about a new oven function, we had even started patenting when we were told it wouldn't go through, I was really sad. Now I feel I could sit at the table and negotiate differently, who knows, after this master I might just have the arguments to do that, perhaps I get the same door slam in the face, but at least I tried, right?"

(A): "To be honest, I usually use the university classroom as a kind of gym where I can work out my knowledge and make new experiments before going to executive classrooms. That helps a lot but seeing how these people do things, how they speak, how they solve problems, helped me even more. It helped me gain confidence in myself. I think it's like a mirror reflection game, I give them the feeling that I know things, and that I can tell them a real story, and they get the feeling that I know what I'm talking about and that I am able to pass on to them something valuable".

Most importantly, actors carved out fragments of classroom speeches and used them to give new interpretations to self-relevant issues, and to attribute intentions, thoughts and positions to ex situ reference people, such as colleagues, consultants, clients, company directors and the like.

(P): "Since I am in this position, I happen to do meetings with marketing people quite often. I mean, when I usually speak with them, I can clearly sense the incompatibilities between us, we just don't speak the same language (…) I remember I asked myself a hundred of times, why do they ask me this thing, or, why does it take them so long to do something that according to me is so quick and easy? Now I think I'm starting for the first time to see what their worlds are like and imagine how they spend their working day, what they discuss about, I really need that on my job..".

(A): "(..) my Finance colleagues always tease me by saying there's nothing else in marketing except for the 4Ps. Well, I must agree that in order to be who I want to be I must manipulate the 4Ps,otherwise there's no strategy, but there's so much stuff in the 4Ps that saying marketing is 'only' about the 4Ps is like saying marketing is about.. everything! I wish I could make them step in here and see how many things we are dealing with while talking about 4Ps, then I'm sure they'd understand.."

In other words, actors tried to make sense of their own ex situ worlds by drawing on thoughts, words, labels, conversations, attitudes that they were exposed to in situ. Trials and errors allowed actors to cast blames and take responsibilities, to build allies and enemies, but without remaining in the same position long enough to be stably identified with it. Instead actors constantly moved towards alternative/possible scenarios without tying themselves explicitly to one course of action only: they provisionally explored different scenarios, simulated alternative situations or anticipated potentially harming consequences of each situation. As pointed out by many of the excerpts above, alternative pronouns were used to pass from one position to the other, from I to you, from us to them and between any of their combinations. Actors went in

search of allies and opponents, role-models and antagonists, arguments and counterarguments and tried to connect to the various networks already in place (Camic and Joas, 2004, Knorr-Cetina, 1999, Latour, 1987). This way current utterances were creating bridges towards utterances from the past, either belonging to selves or to others, and forging connections with discourses yet to come (Bakhtin, 1982, Vygotskij, 1978, Mead, 1967). Sometimes actors spoke to their audiences, other times to themselves and many other times they seemed to be addressing an invisible listener, such as a judge, or an alter-ego. In most cases actors seemed to continue conversations initiated elsewhere and to project them forward. All in all, it seemed that actors paradoxically made sense of their worlds by seeing fragments composed and recomposed in the hands of the others:

> (P): "Many of the topics that we are dealing with seem pretty familiar to me.. or at least pretty easy to understand.. being a market leader, analyzing the market, the volumes, the competitors, reaching a certain kind of.. ehm..dominant design, all these are things I already knew, at least sort of… If someone asked me to give the definition of these terms, I don't know, I'd probably be able to talk for a couple of minutes, but then I wouldn't know what else to say. If you ask me to talk about thermodynamics I can go on for hours but about… dominant designs? (laughs). Each time professors talk I say to myself, hey, I already knew that, I've seen it at work so many times, I mean, usually what they say and how they say it is so.. commonsensical that I too feel I could speak like them, but sometimes I ask myself, would I really?"

What about the Theory-Practice Relation?

As I analyzed and tried to reconstrue the various association strategies that practitioners and academics used in order to expand their knowledge, I found that knowledge exchanges bore a strong bond with action. While actors tied themselves in provisional relations, their knowledge exchanges became embodied, concrete, almost tangible. Conversations served as interaction grids in which the place that each actor assigned to self and others had almost a 'physical' presence. Each interaction was a form of 'territorialization' in which actors sliced situations according to the number of contenders around them: a piece for oneself and some pieces for

others. At the same time, there was a constant moving between one's own places and the places of others, between knowledge already in place and knowledge that actors were still looking for.

Specifically, I was surprised to find that while they tried to get closer to each other participants almost exchanged perspectives or 'knowing modes': academics shifted their knowing mode from theory to theorizing and back, while practitioners passed from an operative, embedded mode of knowing to a reflexive, almost theoretical mode and the other way around.

For instance, as academics became increasingly involved with practitioners, their theorizing acquired a performative dimension and turned into a sort of practice. While they struggled to step into practitioners' shoes and invited practitioners to step into their own, academics passed from talking their talk -representing ideas individually or mentally- to walking it -making ideas visible and tangible for others, during interactions. By joining initial pivotal selections with personal stories and anecdotes, improvised activities, role play, ad-hoc classroom experiments or local/indexical exemplifications, academics managed to constantly involve practitioners in classroom speeches and take them on guided trips across new possible worlds. They acted as if they were at the same time moderators, brokers, tour guides and animators:

> "(A): Ok, but with this we've just begun scratching the surface, now let's really have some fun! You guys are engineers, so I'm sure you'll love these data interrogation procedures! So let's begin, shall we? On your marks, get set…ok! Wow, we were lucky, we got a 0.489 regression coefficient, do you know what that means? (laughing) Judging by your face I suppose not. Well, you should know in social science we usually exult for much lower coefficients, so gentlemen, I believe you are now assisting to the live making of good science, it seems one of our hypotheses is very credible!"

Discourses about technological innovation management appeared as journeys, collection of broad meanings about the world, a vast harbour from and to which actors sailed together in quests for new possible routes. Additionally, it seemed that classroom materiality (eg., textbooks, assignment tasks, study cases, online platforms, evaluation questionnaires, powerpoints and blackboard drawings, figures and graphical representations) served as departure points in both the structuration and deconstruction of the different knowledge systems that intersected the

classroom. From one hand, materiality was a means to create structure: it allowed actors to present a set of clear distinctions, stick to plans, and maintain a formal attitude towards interlocutors. From the other hand, it served as anchors for travelling between diverging in situ and ex situ routes of selves and others, and for moving back, forth and across different moments in time. For instance, during lessons academics frequently used the blackboard to draw graphical representations and figures that accompanied the flow of their discourses. As they began a certain topic, they approached the blackboard and drew a first element, then a second and a third one, and successively pinned additional elements, according to the evolution of their stories. The more the flow of the story advanced, the more elements of graphical representations piled up and transformed. First boxes were drawn and labels were placed, then new shapes appeared and got chained to the ones already in place while others faded or re-proposed within different configurations.

For example, the following typical classroom conversation reflects many of the arguments exposed so far. First of all, it brings evidence about the role of academics as guides through meaning journeys. Secondly, it shoes how blackboard and classroom space were typically used by academics and practitioners to negotiate different views and perspectives about an argument and brings some evidence of how actors used the physical space to enact negotiations and move provisionally from one idea to the other. It also shows that a meaning journey typlically helped multiply arguments while leaving most of them incomplete -or, to put it differently, open for completion. Furthermore, it shows how, the more arguments accumulated and multiply, actors started discussing about the necessity of a ‘third dimension’. The excerpt also gives an idea about how actors tried to ‘push’ and ‘pull’ interlocutors to their sides, and most importantly, it

emphasizes the central role that movement and performativity usually played in classroom theorizing:

(during a marketing lesson, the professor goes to the blackboard and starts drawing a two coordinates 'price x quality' graph and then starts building her reasoning around it)

(A): "Let's take either case, of homogeneous or heterogeneous markets. Sometimes as much as I tried to cut out triangles, the reality doesn't let me do it"

(and she draws equally distributed asterisks throughout the graph).

(A): "However fortunately not all of us search for the same thing. Let's pretend this here is John and this other is Jack, they're both going to the supermarket to buy salad. John is looking for a cheap salad and John for a high quality one"

(and she draws inside the graph 2 clusters A and B that she closes inside triangles)

(P1): "But must I always have this polarization? Why can I not position in the middle, for instance?"

(She goes to the graphic and draws a new asterisk in the middle of the graph, at equal distance from the 2 clusters. Then she starts drawing arrows to indicate movement of A and B and changes the position of the triangles)"

(A): "If I do that, when B arrives I lose market share, like this, you see? when C arrives, I lose market share again, this time like this.. Remember last time I was making the sugar example? Remember we saw how few differentiated the sugar market was? And what have Eridania done out of this market?"

(P2): "They placed their products there, right in the middle, but in a different way…"

(P3): "Different because they created a new necessity.."

(She turns to the graph and touches with the marker the asterisk in the middle).

(A): "So I want to position right here. You say, they positioned in the middle but differently because they created a new need. And what does that mean from a graphical point of view?"

(silence)

(A): "What does that mean? Come on, I am standing before a class of engineers, you should know these things better than me.."

(P2): "They created a new dimension!"

(she approaches the blackboard, takes the marker in her hand and begins drawing a new coordinate. Then moves to the other board and remakes the graph anew; she draws first the two coordinates from the previous drawing, then the equally distributed asterisks and then she circles two of them and uses a discontinuous line to draw the 'third dimension').

(A): "I always use the following metaphor: segmentation is like a pair of glasses that I can put on and take off at any moment. If you manage to see a new picture, it might be that you have already created the third dimension. But please be careful, we are not talking about static concepts here, but about things that are dynamic, constantly changing, this is what the third dimension is actually all about".

Time after time arrows appeared in one place and disappeared from others, changed direction, trajectory and constantly multiplied, until the idea and its material representation meshed together in a hybrid whole. Models were first given shape, then shapes were personified, and actors projected selves and others in the middle of these material configurations:

(A): "And where are you in all this situation? Are you here? And where is your competitor? Ok, let's see, this is another different guy, he's taller and got longer hair, and he's here. If we cut this, let's say, by 20%, where will you all be? What will you be doing?"

All in all, the constant interplay between pronouns, indexical expressions, objects and technologies, from one side, and those actors, groups, situations that were intended, rendered the

knowledge that participants exchanged mobile, embedded in materiality and inherently performative. Instead of teaching them about how to order their worlds through theoretical concepts, it seems academics practiced theorizing as an exercise of disorder. It was only by first dismantling the already in place that they made some space for the new.

At the same time practitioners passed, under academics' guidance, from an operative, embodied mode of knowing to a reflexive, almost theoretical mode and then the other way around. There was a strong interplay between practitioners' initial intentions of acquiring tools and know-how immediately applicable to their jobs and their subsequent intention to detach from their day to day world and look at it from the outside. When practitioners initially entered the master's program they talked about themselves using pivotal, schematized distinctions and sequential, finite processes descriptions that they deemed 'more' adequate' for the master context. However as they interacted with academics and other business school actors, initial knowledge structures were defrozen and deconstructed: phases were reversed or eluded and new networks of meanings irradiated from pivotal distinctions outwards, into the multiple relations that practitioners carried on in their day to day lives.

All in all, as classroom interaction unfolded, practitioners passed from frozen distinctions and schematizations to their de-freezing and deconstruction and then the other way around. This occurred as they performed discovery journeys under the guidance of academics that they selectively used in order to make sense outside classroom, in their own worlds:

"(P): This whole situation with professors reminded me of a little story I heard from a French consultant during one of our development programs; I didn't really like the guy and I personally think he told this story all wrong, but despite his intentions the story remained impressed in my mind up to today. There was this farmer who owned a wheat field. Every year he used to cultivate the field, gather the crop and make bread that he used to feed his family and exchange goods with the rest of the villagers, more or less this is how the consultant framed it; then one year, as the farmer goes to the field to gather his crop, he sees a big, dark green dragon, gets terribly frightened and runs away. The next day he tells everybody about the fierce dragon but he doesn't find anybody with enough courage to go face it. Time goes by and for the loss of all, the farmer stops cultivating his field. One day, a stranger stops by; the villagers tell him about the dragon in the wheat field and, unlike them, he shows no fear, so they beg him to help the farmer. The stranger takes his weapons and heads

for the wheat field, but surprisingly, instead of a terrifying dragon he finds a giant, round shaped, dark green watermelon! He runs to tell the good news to the villagers, dear hosts, what you have taken for a dragon is actually just a big watermelon, but the villagers know what they've seen so they call him a liar and chase him away. Time goes by and two other strangers stop by the village and help them fight the dragon, but they too are chased away, just like the first one; until one day another stranger comes to town, and at villagers' invitation, he takes all his tools and heads for the wheat field. When seeing the giant watermelon, he takes out the hoe and after a couple of hours of work he pulls out the melon, puts it on a plate, slices it, takes it to the villagers and says, you see this? What you've thought was a fierce dragon, had been a giant watermelon all along! The villagers of course rejoiced of their luck, praised their saviour and asked him to stay around for a while and teach them how to distinguish a dragon from a watermelon"

The journeys to which both academics and practitioners referred were journeys of 'becoming', they implied manifold performative moments and points of interaction and exchange; they were instruments for dealing with ambiguity and multiplicity, and had a permeable yet temporary character. Although most of these episodes aimed at convergence, they did not lack conflicts and divergences. As practitioners acted together with academics, they explored both their worlds and the worlds of the others, so that the tidy became messy, monologues split into multi-voiced dialogues, and each taken for granted distinction became a departure point for new provocative inquiries.

Furthermore, not only associations were tightly connected to action, but none of them constituted as final, definitive versions of knowledge, but they all were open, shifting and transformational. As they struggled to make things work in the classroom, actors passed from the subjective to objective, from the linear to the multidimensional, from the unfamiliar to the familiar and, funnily, then the other way around. While they 'made things work' in one relation, they were simultaneously struggling to make them work in another one. This way, the order they crafted in one context bare the seeds for disorder in another context. Furthermore, connections were often weakened or rerouted by unexpected consequences, both in situ and ex-situ, leaving the outcome of 'translations' open to new possible rounds of transformation:

(P): "I really liked last week seminar, I found it inspiring, after that I went and talked to my boss about it and together we decided to try to organize something similar in our company. So we talked to the guys who did the seminar, they were really enthusiastic about the opportunity, and we fixed them a meeting with our HR director. After all, it didn't work out well, I can't at least tell you why, as far as I understood it was for

bureaucratic reasons. Anyway, the guys left us a couple of books that now me and my boss are reading quite.. frenetically, I would say! (laughs) Who knows, maybe if we go on like that we'll be able to do something on our own someday, build up our.. fourth dimension! (laughs)"

FROM GAPS TO TANGLES: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY

There are a series of implications that the study can bring to OS literature and to the relation of OS academia with the practice world in general. First of all, it shades light on many of the controversies of the theory-practice debate and goes against some of the core assumptions of the gap argument. Secondly, it contributes to the broader literature about communities of practice and to a new understanding about the way in which exchanges between them might occur.

Usually the assumption that has most characterized the theory-practice debates in organization science has been the assumption of *difference*. Accordingly, academics and practitioners belong to different worlds, have different interests, knowledge, expertise, and manage to legitimate their separateness according to different sets of practices and discursive strategies. The difference hypothesis also implies that exchanges between these two poles are often difficult, impossible or irreconcilable. Furthermore, while supporters of the difference argument alluded to a 'problematic situation' or to 'faultiness' as suggested by the recurrence of the term 'gap', they also created a compensatory dimension of optimism which patronizes the wide debate arena on gap reduction policies and problem solving strategies.

This study instead departs from these assumptions and brings evidence about the fact that encounters in the real world between academics and practitioners are as much about theory as they are about practice. It also points out that gaps are not one but multiple, such as gaps between what one perceives and what the others perceive, between one's own intents and the ones of people around her, between what one knows and what one thinks she needs to know, between

what one does and what the others expect her to do, and so on and so forth. Most importantly, the study shows that each of these manifold gaps come entangled to one another, in the same way in which faultiness always comes embedded with opportunities. Differently from what the theory-practice gap literatures suggests, nothing of what was observed in the interaction between academics and practitioners was transferred or transmitted, in the same way in which nothing 'really' failed to be transferred or transmitted. Instead everything was locally and socially translated through relations. Furthermore, the relations developed in the classroom were at no times isolated, nor did they mark the gap between the fiction of one world and the reality of the other one. Instead all relations stretched outwards into different times and places and into the day to day worlds of both academics and practitioners.

Such arguments are not completely new. They have already been treated to some extent by those contributions which have studied how different practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991, Brown and Duguid, 1991, 2001), managerial (Deetz, 1992, Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003), organizational (Pratt and Foreman, 2000), occupational (Van Maanen and Barley, 1982, Whalley and Barley, 1997), professional (Ibarra, 1999, Karreman and Alvesson, 2004) or expertise communities (Leonardi, 2007, Orlikowski and Gash, 1994) manage to exchange knowledge despite differences. Many of these contributions have generally looked at how boundary work or negotiation is usually achieved and with what consequences for the groups and communities in question or, in alternative, for the institutionalized professions that they represent (Barley, 1986, 1990). Some contributions have particularly paid attention to what happens at the peripheries or boundaries of different communities (see Bechky, 2003a, 2003b; Carlile 2002, 2004; Orlikowski, 2007, Leonardi and Bailey, 2008, Star and Griesemer, 1989), or described the making of their

temporary encounters (Bechky, 2006, Howard-Grenville et al., 2011). Although this study builds on many of these research interests, yet it is aimed to bring in a different perspective.

In particular, the study takes a fine-grained look at those mechanisms normally labelled as 'boundary work', 'liminality' or 'negotiation process' through which academics and practitioners, as members of two institutionalized communities, manage to interact, but considers them from a different perspective. Usually negotiation between individuals which are part of different communities has been seen either as a way to create similarities despite differences (sharing) or as a way to maintain similarities despite differences (legitimating differences). For instance, many have testified that in order for different communities to be able to interact, it is fundamental that members create a common ground allowing them to overcome differences and exchange information (Bechky, 2003a, 2003b, 2006, Yanow, 2004, Bartel and Garud, 2009, Lave and Wenger, 1991, Nicolini et al., 2003). Others instead have seen negotiation and its various underlying mechanisms as a means through which individuals managed to keep face with respect to others while sticking at the same time to their own interests (Carlile, 2002, 2004). Therefore negotiation has been often seen as a process which enables people to *do things*, such as reach some common purposes or stick to some differentiated goals.

Instead the present study points towards a different conceptualization of negotiation, as a modular system of patterned inter-subjectivities built of chains of actions and reactions, intended and unintended consequences and sequentially alternating sensemaking and sensegiving activities, which, just like a snowball effect, bring in continuous sequences of micro-changes that are pervasive, invisible, transformational and generative at the same time.

First of all, the study points out to the importance of social interaction in triggering both intended and unintended consequences for all those actors who engage in any kind of knowledge

exchange. For example, although individuals might set off to an interaction with the intention to build a common framework or to reach some personally relevant goals such as self-esteem, distinctiveness or social legitimation, as exchanges proceed, initial intentions become just as blurred as the similarities and distinctions between them, or as the boundaries marking their distinctiveness. As pointed out in the study, academics and practitioners did have different interests as well as many points of convergence. However, there was a reiterative circle of transformation between differences and similarities, and both played an equally important part in knowledge exchanges. For instance, it has been shown that whenever academics and practitioners tried to reach their own interests they got contaminated and remained provisionally entrapped in other's webs of interests which in turn were transfigured once they become part of them. There were thus a set of continuous micro-sequences of change of which actors themselves were not always aware and which often brought consequences that the actors had not calculated. For instance, it was common for each individual to enact refined mechanisms of social influence in which she who tried to persuade ended up being persuaded, she who stereotyped ended up destereotyping and she who doubted some things eventually ended up quasi-accepting them, as she played with their meanings and constantly put them to the test.

This is not the same as saying that through interaction differences were forever cancelled or that similarities took over and expanded from the boundaries to the core of academia and practice communities. It is just to say that negotiations were not static structures or finite episodes with a clear-cut beginning and a well-defined end, while their outcomes were not identical from one exchange to the other, so that individuals most commonly neither succeeded nor failed to translate things lying in between them. Instead change was microscopic and continuous, it was interactive and radial, spreading from a relation outward into other associated

relations, causing contagions-in-becoming. In becoming one piece of the assemblage was drawn into the territory of another piece, changing its value as an element and bringing about a new unity. An example of this idea of translation might be best illustrated in the way in which atoms are drawn into an assemblage with nearby atoms through affinities rather than an superordinate purpose (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987).

Furthermore, I found that despite common beliefs, translations were operated not in one but in two senses, from the unfamiliar to the familiar and then the other way around, from the familiar to the unfamiliar, in the form of a reiterative dance which drew its cadence from the succeeding of individuals' purposes at hand. In turn, the reiterative dance of translations brought moments of problematization of both self and others, of both those things that were central, solid and consolidated and of the elements which were new, emergent and peripheral. For example, if we looked at the organization of the master's setting in the beginning and in the end of the program, relational structures would appear more or less identical, not to mention that once the master was over in situ organization dissolved. However, despite temporariness and provisionality, the subtle and reciprocal changes enacted by individuals systematically triggered sets of micro-changes even to some of their most consolidated states of order which exceeded the temporary organization of the business school setting. For example, through constant mechanisms of 'push' and 'pull', even the most stable relations (eg. academics' membership in academia communities, practitioners' membership in organizations) were questioned, partially disinvested and then reinvested, according to purposes at hand.

These findings are to some extent contradictory with respect to contributions that argue that knowledge exchange between different communities is a costly and hard to accomplish social activity (Bechky, 2003, Carlile, 2002, 2004). Usually, this idea is based on the assumption that

each actor bears on her shoulders the entire effort to translate boundary content into core content. If instead one sees each action as a reaction and each individual not as a representative of a homogeneous community of similar peers but as a node in a relation that is in turn connected to many other relations as to form heterogeneous, loosely coupled socio-material arrangements, then exchanges, even between individuals pertaining to different groups or professional communities, might appear more ordinary, mundane and gratuitous than we usually think. From this perspective, each actor injects 'novelty' here and there, but not in a random nor in a resolutive manner, but according to the purposes which connect her to each of the relations in which she participates.

All this suggests that the OS theory-managerial practice relations could be reconsidered as loosely coupled networks of relations that draw on broader systems of relations (Collins, 1985, Czarniawska, 1997, 2008, Knorr-Cetina, 1981, 1983, Law, 1992, Latour, 1987, Schatzki, 2001, 2005, Weick, 2003). Furthermore, it indicates that by acknowledging multiplicity, heterogeneity and fragmentation of both practice and academia worlds, the theory-practice debate and the boundary exchange debate can be enriched whilst considered from a different perspective.

If both OS academia and management practice worlds are a multiplicity of fragmented sub-communities constituted through the interplay of different types of knowledge, social interests and socio-material practices, the mechanisms through which theory-practice gaps are created might ask for reconsideration. For instance, what is ex-situ, unfamiliar and thus centrifugal in a situation, can easily become local and centripetal in another one. Additionally, sharing knowledge within the same community might be just as easy or problematic as doing it across different organizations, systems or communities. A factor that has been often underestimated in both the theory-practice debate and more in general in debates about exchanges between

different communities of practice is the fact that differences can be found not just between but also within groups, and to say that differences between groups must be greater than the ones within is not always a resolutory argument. Empirical evidence in this study suggests that individuals must face differences and dissonance coming both from peers and from individuals which are perceived as outgroup and that they have infinitely complex resources for doing that, such as, for instance, the enactment of what I called provisional relations. For example, during classroom interaction, it was not just academics trying to make sense of practitioners and practitioners trying to make sense of academics, but academics trying to make sense of other academics and practitioners trying to make sense of other practitioners. As a consequence, each translation or exchange was a subtle alternation between trying to make sense of self and one's world and trying to make sense of the other, and this was precisely what made knowledge circulate between networks and constituted the very force which propelled translations. therefore crossing boundaries might be a relative term, because what is in situ in one place can easily become ex situ in another and the other way around. Findings are coherent and at the same time complementary to those studies that have seen fragmentation as a precursor of continuous change (Brown and Eisenhadt, 1997, Tsoukas and Chia, 2002, Weick and Quinn, 1999) and a facilitator of embeddedness (Dacin et al.,1999, Garud and Karnoe, 2001, Pentland and Feldman, 2007, Reay et al., 2006) and relationality as a main transformative mechanism (Bradburry and Lichtenstein, 2000, Chia, 2002, Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011, Clegg et al., 2006, Czarniawska, 1997, Czarniawska and Sevon, 1996, Hernes 2007, Garud et al., 2011)

Therefore, instead of considering a single forever widening gap between theory and practice, two alternative hypothesis might profile: either we acknowledge the existence of many gaps of different sizes and varying location marking the boundaries within and in between OS

academics and management practitioners, or we consider multiple tangles of different composition and varying location that stretch over individuals and their worlds. Fragmentation and embeddedness thus can be seen as two facets of the same coin and considering theory and practice as gapped or entangled, just a question of perspective. Generally multiplicity, fragmentation and heterogeneity both within and between OS scholars and management practitioners have been seen as problematic because they hinder knowledge flows, obstruct collaborations, slow down change and enhance local power mechanisms. However, this study points out to the contrary: gaps and tangles are 'windows for opportunity' (Tyre and Orlikowski, 1994) through which transformation occurs. Different interests, in turn, are not necessarily what keeps academics and practitioners apart; they are 'inter-esse' (Latour, 1987), the junction points lying in between them and facilitating loosely coupled connectivity. Just like translations, they have no beginning or end, and no definitive manifestation. Instead they are always in the middle, between things, interbeing or 'inter-mezzo' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987).

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE: ON SOCIAL ENCOUNTERS AND INTERACTIONAL RECURSIVITY

If change during interaction is continuous, contagious and unavoidable, then any encounter between academics and practitioners holds the seeds for a so called 'relevant' exchange (Czarniawska and Sevon, 1996, 2005, March, 2010). Theory-practice relations thus call for moments and places of encounter between academics, practitioners and any other actors theorizing and practicing about and around organizations. Business schools, scholarly and practitioner oriented journals, conferences, research publications, textbooks, popular books, are only some of those direct and indirect media that have the potential to activate theory-practice relations (Shapiro et al, 2007, Bartunek et al., 2001). But can it be that any encounter is

potentially a success story? Is 'traditional' scholarship just as able to talk to practitioners as 'critical', 'action-based' or 'engaged' scholarships? Contrary to many opinions (see for example Alvesson and Willmott,1996, Mintzberg, 2004, Pfeffer and Fong, 2002, Johnson and Van de Ven, 2006), this study showed that when put into practice and confronted with real interlocutors, 'traditional' scholarship became at the same time inherently engaged, action-oriented, critical and reflexive. In the same way, attention has been drawn to the fact that no matter how high the engagement or how embodied, reflexive and pragmatic the discourses of academics, practitioners were at no time passive absorbers of inert concepts but constantly acted as 'bricoleours' (Garud and Karnoe, 2003, Rao et al., 2005), they rebuilt knowledge and identity categories according to purposes at hand. Similarly, it has been highlighted that networks to which academics and practitioners participate are in continuous becoming. As a consequence, what has been settled today in a relation might be dismantled tomorrow in another relation and this awareness that should accompany both academics and practitioners during all the exchanges in which they engage. If it is true that "once having been in a particular place for any considerable time… we are forever marked by that place, which lingers in us indefinitely and in a thousand ways" (Cassey in Schatzky, 2001:695), it is just as likely that repeated preceding exchanges might alter those marks until making them unrecognizable.

All in all, it results that connecting our scholarship with the worlds of management practitioners is not an unreachable desideratum, but an inherent potentiality of our most mundane social exchanges (Daft and Lewin, 2008, March, 2003, Weick, 2002, 2007) and that differences, conflicts and misunderstandings are just as necessary to advancing the field as collaborations and coordination. Without this delicate equilibrium between sameness and differences, translations in and outside the classroom would be impossible. From this perspective, it might make no sense to

try to drop all our tools nor to craft newer, more powerful ones (Weick, 2007), since what we can accomplish lies already in our hands and in the hands of our reference others. It is likely thus that "great enthusiasms, commitments, and actions are tied not to hopes for great outcomes but to a willingness to embrace the arbitrary and unconditional claims of a proper life" (March, 2003:206).

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Appendix

Appendix 1. Description of research context

PARTICIPANTS	RELATIONS	INTERACTION EPISODES
1. Practitioners as master's participants (n=30)	**2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11;**	**Lectures** **Seminars**
2. Academics as master's educators (n= 14)	**1,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10;**	**Discussions of reading materials** **Discussions on business cases**
3. Program coordinators (n=2: out of which 1 academic educator and 1 company CEO)	**1,2,4,5,8,9,11;**	**Conferences** **Business games** **Business projects and team work**
4. Business school's directors (n=2)	**1,2,3,8,9,11;**	**Take away assignments** **Classroom written assignments**
5. Consultants as master's educators (n=12; 1 full lecturer, 5 co-lecturers, 6 seminar developers)	**1,2,3,9;**	**Testimonials** **Web platform cross-postings** **Company visits**
6. Consultants as testimonial guests (n=2)	**1,2, 3,9;**	**Interviews** **Informal conversations**
7. Practitioners as testimonial guests (n=10)	**1, 2;**	**Mentoring and consulting** **Skype meetings**
8. Practitioners as hosts and presenters during company visits (n=8)	**1,2, 4;**	
9. Program tutors (n=3)	**1,2,3,4,5,6,10,**	**SITES**
10. Course tutors (consultants, research assistants, Ph.D students) (n=8)	**1,2,9;**	**Master's classroom** **Business school's spaces and activities** **Master's dedicated web platform**
11. Practitioners' sponsors (their companies' CEOs, HR managers, functional supervisors, etc) (n=12)	**1,3,4;**	**Practitioners' companies and other private spaces** **Academics' offices in universities and business schools and their other private spaces**
12. Researcher (n=1)	**1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10;**	

OTHER CONTEXT RELEVANT INFORMATION:

Master's duration= 1 year, part time format: 15 residentials of 2 full days each plus remote interaction (web platform, take aways, etc);
Master structure: 8 core courses x 16-32 h each; 12 seminars x 2 h each; 4 company visits x 4 h each; 3 activities of team project work plus final degree project.
Participants: all currently employed (50% R&D engineers and technicians; 30% operation managers; 10% project manager; 10% other) operation field: 35% automotive, 25% electronic, 20% ICT, 10% energy, 10% other) the cost of the program is sponsored in 90% of cases by participants' companies; 90% were motivated to engage in further education and had already asked their companies to be considered for education openings and opportunities.
Academics: all affiliated with business school's main University partner (departments of Management, Business Engineering and Communications); conducting research and teaching at graduate and undergraduate level on the broad topic of management of technological innovation (institutionalist and financial perspectives on innovation, marketing of new products, people management in creative industries, innovation entrepreneurship, etc); all educators (academics and non-academics) were retributed by the business school as regulated by collaboration contracts;
The organization of the master was the responsibility of school directors, program coordinators and program tutors who contacted all the other involved actors and intermediated interactions between them. For instance, academics proposed lecture syllabuses, participants' sponsors validated the business school's offers; consultants, practitioners, sponsors who had previously worked with the school were often contacted to play some part in the forthcoming editions of the schools' masters (eg, sponsors became testimonial guests or educators and hosted company visits, consultants who had previously delivered testimonials/seminars were asked to become program tutors, academics who previously had done seminars on given topics successively proposed extended course syllabuses to the attention of program coordinators, etc)
There were no strict pre-determined criteria about course organization, so each educator had a considerable range of freedom. Academics were in charge of their own courses and decided how to structure them, whether to include testimonials, business cases, conjoint teaching or other; they chose course activities and materials, evaluation methods, grading criteria, etc. Although there were no explicit rules, all actors manifested awareness of the existence of some tacit rules regulating their teaching in the business-school context: activities, materials, courses had to be 'interesting' and 'relevant' for practitioners, had to be to some extent connected to their day to day realities, reading materials had to be comprehensible and in line with students' background, educators had to coordinate in order not to repeat the same contents from one course to the other, and those who did integrating parts of the same course had to coordinate on topics and final evaluation; it was common agreement that the master's experience should have been more pragmatic than evaluative: focus was given to insights, implication and project work rather than on evaluating knowledge through formal tests; practitioners were treated as clients and business experts and not as university students. However, the methods, materials and arguments educators used didn't differ very significantly from the ones they used in other graduate and undergraduate courses. The same thing was valid for testimonials, seminars and company visits. Usually, actors had the discretion to organize their own space as they pleased, but had the duty to collaborate with master's coordinator and tutors to establish, priority themes, time slots, etc, and to make sure their contents were broadly 'in line' with the ones of other educators and presenters.
Practitioners' classroom presence was recorded at each residential by program tutors; there was a trade-off between the time practitioners spent on master's activities and the time they spent on their job-related activities; since they recurrently referred to be strongly motivated in conducting both activities simultaneously, they struggled to reconcile them throughout the one year in which they attended classes (eg., they programmed business trips

according to residentials, programmed personal commitments according to work and education commitments, used free slots available on the job to complete master assignments, left classroom some hours earlier to participate in company meetings, etc)
Evaluation: practitioners were evaluated by academics on written assignments, take away assignments and classroom projects; academics were evaluated by practitioners after every course through a semi-structured anonymous questionnaire. Evaluations were never made public on any side and were rarely object of discussion between any of the parts involved.
During and (especially) at the end of the program practitioners briefly and schematically reported to their sponsors and supervisors about masters' activities
Researcher was present or had access to all interaction (participant observer); The program coordinator announced the researcher's presence in the first day of the program. She was referred to as an "independent researcher that was fully authorized and supported by the business school", whose research was" interesting and might have provided valuable insights both for practitioners and for the business school"; The researcher gradually presented herself to all participants stating her interests and main goals: interest to study the theory-practice relation in the field of management, interest in understanding better the world of those who managed technological innovation on a daily basis and interest in understanding the worlds of who did research on the management of technological innovation, interest in understanding their perceived duties and expectations with respect to the master's context (*see attached presentation and interview guidelines for a full description). Additionally to participant observation, the researcher conducted two rounds of semi-structured interviews with actors outside the master's framewok.

Appendix 2: Other attachments: research documents (researcher presentation leaflet and semi-structured interview guideline)

Progetto di ricerca che coinvolgerà EMTIM edizione 2011-2012

CHI: Paula Ungureanu*, dottoranda presso il Dipartimento di Scienze Aziendali, Università di Bologna;

COSA: tesi di dottorato che vuole approfondire il **dibattito intorno alla relazione tra teoria e pratica** nel campo del management;

SCOPO: fare un **confronto tra i modi in cui accademici e practitioner** operanti nel campo del management **strutturano e modificano le loro conoscenze**;

COME:

- **partecipando** insieme agli altri ai residential, seminari, workshop del master
- **intervistando** partecipanti e docenti del master (domande libere sui significati attribuiti al concetto innovazione, sulla propria esperienza in questo campo, ecc)

PERCHE' PARTECIPARE ALLA RICERCA:

- un modo per **monitorare il proprio percorso all'interno del master** (sulla base delle interviste la ricercatrice costruirà delle mappe di rappresentazione che consentiranno ai partecipanti di tener traccia di quali erano state le *aspettative e conoscenze all'ingresso* e di come esse si sono modificate in termini qualitativi *durante l'esperienza formativa*);

- a fine master verranno forniti i risultati sintetici della ricerca: consentirà ai partecipanti di **capire meglio la relazione tra teoria e pratica nella vita quotidiana** e di **stabilire le differenze/ somiglianze tra il loro modo di concepire l'innovazione tecnologica e quello degli accademici;**

CONDIZIONI:

- la ricerca non ha **alcun scopo valutativo!**
- rispetto **confidenzialità e anonimato**
- le informazioni non verranno utilizzate all'interno del master e non verranno condivise con docenti, altri partecipanti, ecc.

PER MAGGIORI INFORMAZIONI:

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PRIMO ROUND: INTERVISTA PARTECIPANTI EDIZIONE EMTIM 2011-2012

Apertura e istruzioni

Il mio nome è Paula Ungureanu, sono una dottoranda in Management presso il Dipartimento di Scienze Aziendali dell'Università di Bologna e sto svolgendo una tesi di ricerca sul rapporto tra teoria e pratica nel campo del management. In particolare, mi interessa capire come manager e accademici strutturano le proprie conoscenze circa un oggetto d'interesse, ad esempio, la gestione dell'innovazione. Ho scelto di fare la mia ricerca all'interno del master che stai frequentando (in particolare la ricerca consiste nell'osservazione di alcuni corsi e nelle interviste ai docenti e partecipanti) e la mia presenza è stata già autorizzata da Alma Graduate School. Visto che hai consentito di partecipare alla ricerca vorrei chiederti di dedicare cca 50 minuti del tuo tempo a commentare una serie di domande circa la tua partecipazione a questo programma, la tua storia lavorativa, il tuo rapporto con l'innovazione in generale (e con la gestione dell'innovazione in particolare). Vorrei sottolineare nuovamente che questa ricerca non ha scopi valutativi: più che come un sondaggio, l'intervista è da considerare come un colloquio informale privo di risposte giuste e sbagliate; il mio obiettivo è lasciarmi guidare dalla tua esperienza e capire il tuo punto di vista personale; le informazioni fornite sono confidenziali e non saranno utilizzate in alcun modo durante il programma che stai frequentando, né saranno divulgate all'azienda di appartenenza, all'istituzione, ai formatori o agli altri partecipanti. Più avanti sarò lieta di condividere con te la trascrizione dell'intervista e le interpretazioni finali di questa ricerca sperando che possano essere interessanti e utili per il tuo sviluppo futuro.

Prima Parte

- Potresti brevemente presentarti menzionando esperienze lavorative passate, ruolo attuale, responsabilità e mansioni?
- Qual è stata la motivazione che ti ha spinto a iscriverti a questo corso? (Se l'iniziativa non è stata tua, quali pensi che siano state le motivazioni di coloro che ti hanno raccomandato per questo corso?)
- Ti è mai capitato di fare un'esperienza del genere? Ci sono aspetti di questo corso che ti sono familiari? Conosci l'istituzione che organizza il corso?
- **Che cosa ti aspetti da questa esperienza?** (Quale potrebbe essere il valore aggiunto da portare alla tua situazione attuale? C'è qualcosa in particolare che ti piacerebbe che accadesse? Cos'è che sicuramente NON ti aspetti da questa esperienza?)
- Cosa ti aspetti da un master in gestione dell'innovazione tecnologica in termini di contenuti e attività?

Seconda Parte

Mi piacerebbe parlare del tema della gestione dell'innovazione tecnologica. Vorrei capire l'uso che ne fai nella vita quotidiana; in più, mi piacerebbe che mi aiutassi a capire come questo tema può essere visto da coloro che lavorano in questo campo.

- Innanzitutto quali sono le prime cose che ti vengono in mente quando senti la parola gestione dell'innovazione?
- Ti è più noto il termine di gestione, quello di innovazione o quello di gestione dell'innovazione? Che ruolo ricoprono questi elementi nella tua vita?
- Quali sono secondo te le cose che una persona che lavora in questo campo dovrebbe assolutamente sapere?
- Quali sono le attività (le cose da fare) più ricorrenti nella gestione dell'innovazione? Puoi farmi qualche esempio basandoti sulla tua esperienza?

- Se domani andassi nella tua azienda, se entrassi nel tuo ufficio, cosa vedrei? Quali sarebbero le frasi che sentirei più frequentemente?

- Se dovessi dire ad altri - colleghi, docenti, altri (eg, persone che non sanno nulla di quest'argomento) 3 cose sulla gestione dell'innovazione tecnologica, quali sarebbero? E se dovessi chiedere ad altri 3 cose sul tema, cosa chiederesti?

Dopo l'intervista

Vorrei chiederti già da ora la possibilità di avere un secondo colloquio, molto simile a quello che abbiamo appena avuto, tra 3-4 mesi, verso la fine del master. Saresti d'accordo?

In più, sono alla ricerca di alcuni partecipanti disposti a dare una descrizione più completa di questo tema. Precisamente, vorrei chiederti di tenere un "mini-diario" durante il master. Come funzionerà? Praticamente a inizio residential vi consegnerò un foglio bianco semplice chiedendovi di scrivere in un paio di frasi/mezza paginetta qualche impressione sollecitata da me (ad esempio, pensieri, dubbi, perplessità, idee, sul residential in questione ecc); potresti tranquillamente scrivere le tue impressioni a mano e consegnarmi il foglietto al prossimo residential. Pensi che potresti farlo?

PRIMO ROUND: INTERVISTE DOCENTI EDIZIONE EMTIM 2011-2012

Apertura ed Istruzioni: idem

Prima Parte:

- Da quanto tempo insegna in questo programma? Quale è stata la motivazione che l'ha portata a diventare uno dei docenti di questo programma? Qual è la sua relazione con l' istituzione che organizza l'EMTIM?

- Le chiederei di parlarmi di questo corso. Com'è nato il progetto? Come si è evoluto da allora?

- **Che aspettative ha da questa esperienza?** (Che cosa si aspetta da un master in gestione dell'innovazione tecnologica in termini di contenuti e attività? C'è qualcosa in particolare che si aspetta da parte dei partecipanti? C'è qualcosa che si è proposto di realizzare attraverso il corso? Quali sono le cose che sicuramente non si aspetta che accadano in questo programma?)

Seconda Parte:

Ora concentriamoci sul tema del corso, sono molto interessata a capire la struttura del programma e la scelta degli argomenti che verranno presentati durante le lezioni.

- Può dirmi qualcosa del programma? Come mai ha scelto questi particolari argomenti? Quali sono state le motivazioni? Iniziamo a parlare del primo tema cercando di passare attraverso l'intero programma di studio.

- Qual è il suo rapporto con il concetto di gestione dell'innovazione? Che ruolo gioca nelle sue attività quotidiane? Che ruolo gioca/ha giocato nella sua carriera accademica? Può farmi qualche esempio?

- Può brevemente indicarmi i suoi interessi di ricerca sull'argomento? (Può darmi l'esempio di un suo lavoro che mi permetterebbe di capire l'approccio personale al tema? Può raccontarmi brevemente com'è nato quel lavoro?)

- Quali sono secondo lei le cose che una persona che lavora in questo campo dovrebbe assolutamente sapere?

- Quali sono le attività (le cose da fare) più ricorrenti nella gestione dell'innovazione? Può farmi qualche esempio?

- Se dovesse dire ad altri (colleghi, studenti/partecipanti al master, altri) 3 cose sulla gestione dell'innovazione tecnologica, quali sarebbero ? E se dovesse chiedere ad altri (colleghi/ professionisti/chi altro?) 3 cose sul tema, cosa chiederebbe?

- Se dovesse raccomandarmi 3 pezzi di letteratura/ricerca su questo tema (sia che si tratti di lavori propri o altrui) quali sarebbero?

Dopo l'intervista:

Siccome vorrei comprendere meglio la struttura del programma, ho intenzione di seguire il corso e leggere alcuni dei riferimenti suggeriti oggi da lei. Pensa che potremmo fare un follow-up nel caso in cui lo ritenessi opportuno?