

Exploring the ‘first change’ experience through the theory of creative action

S. La Rocca

Abstract

This work analyzes entrepreneurship literature to show the inconsistency of exploring change within the means-ends schema. It rejects the viewpoint that opportunities are unseen objects of the environment while suggesting to root the process of entrepreneuring in pragmatism. Opportunities then are defined as the life experience of ‘creating the problem’. Drawing on Mead, this work rejects the dualisms of subjects and objects by including subjectivity in Darwin’s sensormotor learning. Drawing on Joas’ pragmatism, instead it assumes that the problem which enacts interaction is not given, but defined as a subjective pre-reflective goal. We claim that the definition of the problem is the core issue of entrepreneurship, but also that Joas’ pre-reflective goals are only a partial way to define the problem. Drawing on Shotter’s practical hermeneutics, therefore it explores this process as experience embedded in the subject’s background and oriented by an *imaginary* and a horizon. By drawing on few narratives about the start-up of few entrepreneurial companies, the definition of the problem appears as the way a ‘first change’ creates the opportunity to start a new business. Then data throughout the life of entrepreneurial entrepreneuring occurs always as a ‘first change’ event.

Key words: first-change, strategizing, pragmatism.

Introduction

The entrepreneurship field assumes that the success of entrepreneurial companies is driven by either entrepreneurial strategies or a vision which orient the search of opportunities already available in the environment. We analyze some entrepreneurship literature to show that the means-ends schema suggests to define clear starting points, a vision or a strategy, which actually prevents the firm to act entrepreneurially. We claim also that, according to the means-ends schema, the search of opportunities is one shot entrepreneurial process which is oriented only to redefine a new clear objective to be implemented according to the strategic management. Opportunities then become a mere discontinuity which calls for change, but does not alter the management approach. We claim that instead entrepreneurial firms are constantly open to the creation of new opportunities in the hurly-burly of daily life. Thus opportunities are temporary outcomes of a daily experimentation of firm-environment relations. Action driven by practical problem then can create new opportunities. Visions and strategy then become themselves incomplete and open to change. They can only be a transitional understanding of a reality always in the way of becoming other than what it is. We explore this view of entrepreneuring by drawing on Mead and Joas' pragmatism which rejects the reductionism of rationalism and cognitivism by assuming the primacy of the subject-object interaction while suggesting how it constitutes the body and the self together with the object. Drawing on Joas, we can also account for the definition of the problem before action. Thus we can explore the experience of entrepreneuring when the creativity of the subject is highly visible because the interaction is only imagined. We call this experience 'the first change'. It shows that the choice to start a new business is a transitional object/experience which generate the opportunity to start a business because it has a non-fictional side embedded in reality, as well as a not-yet real side which addresses the next event and a horizon. By drawing on narratives about the start-up of entrepreneurial firms we also suggest

that the events immediately following the ‘first change’ are a highly meta strategizing process which defines the strategic and organization design as outcome of the problems the entrepreneur encounters while implementing a business out of ‘the first change’. Together these two kinds of events represent two sides of the same issue of defining the problem. Both provide general clues about the process of entrepreneuring which can be extended to any entrepreneurial action. The comparison between Mead and Joas’ pragmatism provides some arguments for such extension.

We also draw on Shotter’s practical hermeneutics for two reasons. First, it enable us to explore ‘the first change’ experience as a process embedded in the subject’s background and his undefined *imaginary* of the world which through experimental relations produces an opportunity while creating a new background and *imaginary* for the next event. Second, Shotter’s view enables us to fill the void of pragmatism about the relation between the immediate event and what surpasses it. Thus, we can explain creativity and entrepreneuring while providing a rationale for continuity consistent with the theory of creative action.

Moving from practical hermeneutics to action theory we extend the properties of the *imaginary* to the event, since they both address the same transition and because conversations, to which Shotter applies the concept of the *imaginary*, are also a form of action. Thus, drawing on the properties of Shotter’s *imaginary*, we define the ‘first change’ as the process which creates the ‘non-fictional’ opportunity to engage in a start-up while addressing a not-yet real immediate move oriented, however, towards a horizon. Besides, we account for the first strategizing entrepreneurial activity as the process which creates a non-fictional side of the strategy while providing opportunities for experimenting new relations. We claim that the whole process of defining the problem encompasses through ‘the first change’ the creation of the opportunity to start a business, and through the events immediately following the opportunities for establishing the new business. According to Joas’ definition of the problem,

both kinds of events precedes action, in the sense that they do not occur within a situation, but are the experimental activity to create the situation. In both kinds of events then subjectivity still prevails over the situation and therefore over the other actors which are not-yet part of a stable relation. We then address creativity in established relations and in the definition of the problem by comparing our approach with Mead's view of creativity.

In the end entrepreneurial stories enable us to undertake a theory-practice dialogical relation which opens up unseen theoretical spaces which widens our view of pragmatism. Above all, it shows that entrepreneuring is made of 'first' change' experiences and the creation of new opportunities which call for abandoning established relations and the creation of new ones.

The means-ends-schema

The means-ends schema stems from Enlightenment which inspires rationalism and cognitivism. It assumes that intentionality is the primary unit of analysis while objective clear goals determine every human and social action, according to either universal laws or to the competent understanding of the environment (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Hui & Idris, 2009; Cope, 2005; Holcomb, Ireland, Holmes & Hitt, 2009; Schenkel, Matthews & Matthew, 2009)). Goals thus ensure objectivity because rationality is inscribed in the "human knowledge of eternal and necessary truths, which elevates us to know ourselves and God", as well as in the "concatenation of truths and sound objections, ... [which] cannot deceive us (Liebnick, Abbagnano & Fornero: 363). Objectivity then implies that (1) the goals of the rational actor cannot be disconfirmed; (2) outcomes match goals; (3) the rational actor is a disembodied mind which forms objective goals while acting to maximize the efficiency of the means; (4) human action is itself an unproblematic mean. These assumptions suggest that change and creativity are only deviations and obstacles to the realization of goals, therefore change can only be epiphenomenon of continuity. From a complexity perspective Schindehutte and Morris confirm that, according to a Newtonian approach, change follows

only “errors and omissions of others that cause surpluses and shortages (Casson, 1982, in Schindeutte & Morris, 2009), or (2) technological, political, regulatory, sociodemographic, perceptual, and other unexpected changes in the environment” (246). The achievement of goals therefore implies correcting these errors, or at most producing some newness, but never novelty. These arguments show that the means-ends schema cannot explain change-in-itself, therefore they suggest to explain entrepreneurship by dropping all means-ends assumptions substituting them with those of a change epistemology. Then the entrepreneurship field can get rid of the objectivism and cognitivism.

A change epistemology rejects in a similar way the dualism of the subject (D’Amboise & Muldowney, 1988; Zahra, Gedajlovic, Neubaum & Shulman, 2009; Baker & Nelson, 2005; Baker & Pollock, 2007), which assumes that the definition of goals is driven by the subject’s personal attributes, emotions, motivations, and expectations (Ross, 1977; Simonton 1986; Gartner, 1989; Baum, Locke, & Smith, 2001; Carter, Gartner, Shaver, & Gatewood, 2003; Ciaravella, Buchholtz, Riordan, Gatewood & Stokes, 2004; Corbett, 2006 Woodman & Schoenfeldt, 1990; Cooper & Park, 2008). Once defined, however, the aims of the subject become an objectivity which determines organizational action. Even subjectivism therefore assumes that goals call for the maximization of the efficiency of means. By assuming the dominance of either subjectivity or objectivity both dualisms, therefore, remove change-in-itself. The subject-environment relation then becomes a asymmetrical dichotomy which cannot account for the hurly-burly of daily situated events and for how they challenge either objective goals or subjective aims. A change perspective instead abandons the primacy of intentionality and assumes as unit of analysis the mediacy between the subject and the situation. It also focuses on how both intersubjectivity and the subject-object interactions constitute at the same time the self, the body and the object. Then each interaction can produce change because we cannot know in advance the outcome of mediation.

A change epistemology also reject empiricism, as a perspective assuming that facts are objective manifestations of reality which progressively unveil a universal absolute truth. This approach sustains the means-ends approach sharing the same impossibility to deal with change-in-itself. Feyerhabend emphasizes dramatically that empiricism prevents theoretical innovation by claiming that “the request to admit only those theories originating from facts leaves us with no theories” (1975: 55). A known critique to empiricism appears as an argument against Popper’s falsification. It rejects Popper’s view that experience can decide of the validity of theories (Popper, 1959, 1972). In sum, by moving from objective goals to objective facts research does not make any progress towards a perspective on creative action which can be of interest to the theory of entrepreneurship as creation of strategic opportunities.

Within the means-ends schema entrepreneurship research often explores change as a process by making it a substantive variables among many to design a model. Then it provides enunciates and arguments that turn it into an objective paradigm. Research then explores correlations. Change-in-itself and creativity are instead described outside the model through empirical facts. Findings then confirm a priori enunciates hypotheses which become unchallengeable prescriptions. The prescription of the model therefore cannot be challenged. Change therefore can only rest on a discontinuity originated in the environment, outside the firm’s situation (Plowman, Baker, Tammy, Kulkarni, Solansky, & Travis, 2007; Dimov, 2007).

The search of opportunities remains embedded in the means-ends perspective. By itself, it does not turn the traditional theory of entrepreneurship into a change perspective. Instead, its emphasis of the process of searching, rather than of creating, opportunities reveals that entrepreneurship is rooted on cognitivism and therefore inexorably on a perspective that deals with change while denying it. Within this field, in fact, the search of opportunities is not

entrepreneurial since it is determined by an objective design which represents a truth to be implemented. On the other side, opportunities themselves halt the flow of strategic events by becoming objective clear goals calling for mere implementation which can be accounted through the axioms of strategic management rather than the theory of entrepreneurship.

Tautology in entrepreneurship

Following the claim that definitions are of great importance in constructing theories (Priem and Butler 2001: 59, 62), we now show that some definitions of entrepreneurship represent tautologies which, being logically true, suggest deductive propositions. The resulting theories therefore confirm a priori research hypotheses missing the opportunity to experiment theoretical innovation. To this analysis we add that even non-tautological definitions of entrepreneurship may not address change-in-itself, unless they are thought within a change epistemology.

A most known definition recites approximately that entrepreneurship is “the search of opportunities that generates new products, new processes, and new markets” (Khan & Manopichetwattana, 1989; Lumpkin & Dess, 1996; Sharma & Chrisman, 1999; Ireland, Hitt, Camp & Sexton, 2001; Sarasvathy, 2001; Daily, McDougall, Covin & Dalton, 2002; De Jong & Marsili, 2006; Zahra, Gedajlovic, Neubaum & Shulman, 2009). By mentioning opportunities and the creation of new products and markets this definition apparently deals with change. However, philosophy warns that this definition is an enunciate which affirms in the ‘predicate’ (the consequent) what is already embedded in the ‘subject’ (the antecedent) (Abbagnano & Fornero, 1998: 1069). In other words, it points that the consequent - the generation of new products, new processes, and new markets (the consequent) is just a predicate of opportunities (the antecedent). The nature of tautology further suggests that the enunciate – the antecedent and its consequent- is true for any value and meaning given to its letters. Being logically true, a tautology can neither be verified nor falsified (Abbagnano &

Fornero, 1998: 1069; Popper, 1959: 314; Priem & Butler, 2001). Drawing on Popper's post-positivism, Priem and Butler implicitly confirm this analysis by suggesting that definitions within a change theory must address "[what] particular conditions, what specific pattern in the data would conclusively refute the theory" (Priem & Butler, 2001: 63). Consequently, we can affirm that the previous definition of entrepreneurship actually does not address change because the verb 'to generate' does not provide any pattern for change. Instead, as tautology, it can account for change only through its letters. Priem and Butler confirm this argument while arguing about the tautological definition of the Resource Based View. Then they add that the value of the antecedent (resources as opportunities) is exogenous and indeterminate (2001: 61, 63), so that in the end it is determined only "by the theory itself" (63), thus removing the empirical world which determines it.

A tautological definition produces tautological constructs. In fact, this kind of research defines a multitude of variables each of which becomes itself a enunciate which affirms entrepreneurship through its letters. Drawing on the means-ends schema then the correlations among variables addresses change without dealing with change.

Many theories represent the entrepreneurial process through variables defining them in entrepreneurial terms while exploring linear correlations. According to Priem and Butler, these constructs do not address how theories, strategies, and opportunities are created or modified, but simply define the value of each variable according to how they increase efficiency and/or effectiveness (Priem & Butler, 2001: 58). Constructs generate only positive tautological correlations. Their findings therefore lose any theoretical meaning. Wittgenstein confirms that "all tautological propositions are pointless because they do not tell anything about their concordance and discordance with the possibility that the state of affair either subsists or does not" (1921: § 4.2). Similarly, other philosophers underline that genuinely tautological statements (and constructs) are trivial in epistemological terms and irrelevant for

knowledge (Putnam, 1975; Russell, Popper, 1959, cited in Abbagnano & Fornero, 1998: 1069-1070). Priem and Butler add that, since the value of the antecedent is indeterminate, tautologies cannot contribute to the prediction of ends. According to them, “a tautological construct can identify ends only when they have been achieved” (64). This argument points that the value of the letters of definitions and constructs is determined “by the ideas of the theory” (83).

We claim that still today tautology inspires definitions and constructs of entrepreneurship. Covin, Ireland and Kuratko’s recent research (2009), for instance, places the concept of corporate entrepreneurship strategy (CE strategy) at the core of the entrepreneurship field. They define it as a “vision-directed, organization-wide reliance on entrepreneurial behavior that purposefully and continuously rejuvenates the organization and shapes the scope of its operations through the recognition and exploitation of entrepreneurial opportunities (2009: 21). Though the linguistic structure of this enunciate is more complex than the previous one, it still represents a tautology since the rejuvenation of organization and operations (as the previous creation of new products, processes and markets) is still embedded in the antecedent represented by opportunities, while opportunities are determined externally independently of the searching subject. This definition does not address the creation of opportunities. At most it can deal with the problem of making the search of opportunities more effective. Covin, Ireland and Kuratko create a model which reproduces the tautology of this definition by confirming that opportunities are objects of the environment, while human action can only participate to their search. Besides, their model deals with entrepreneurship through the letters of the variables of the construct. Besides, processes are turned into one among many variables. Moreover, variables are defined in terms of the general competitive advantage of the organization (24). The construct does not provide any indication about what specific pattern in the data would conclusively refute the theory. Besides, it addresses positive linear

correlations, so that both the entrepreneurial vision and the entrepreneurial organizational architecture slavishly confirm the entrepreneurial out without dealing with the processes of searching and exploiting new opportunities. In the end the construct is not offered as an entrepreneurial theory through the experiments of research, but simply through predefined ideas about the theory external to the research.

In the end tautological constructs deal with change by maintaining their grip in the means-ends approach. The search of opportunities implement an objective strategy while the consequent generation of new products, and markets implement the found opportunities. This strategy is entrepreneurial only in its letters. Strategies and opportunities remain external to the search process which can never be generative. Even undefined visions do not disprove the tautological nature of these entrepreneurial constructs when undefined visions replace entrepreneurial strategies, since the search of opportunities is then driven by a clear organizational design. Change then occurs as epiphenomenon and discontinuity to which follows an unproblematic implementation aiming at filling the gap between opportunities, strategy, vision, organization, and operations, still according to the means-ends schema.

Now it is clear that the traditional theory of entrepreneurship misses the understanding of the process of entrepreneuring in itself. By pointing that correlations may produce a strategic repositioning, it addresses a further tautology since this change appears only formally in the letters of the model.

These arguments show the need for new approaches to entrepreneurship. We claim that parting from tautology is not sufficient because non-tautological theories may also remain within the means-ends schema. Therefore we claim that even non-tautological theories cannot explain change if embedded in the means-ends schema. Priem and Butler affirm that not tautological rationalist theories historically 'helped advance strategic management by better aligning constructs with their operationalizations (59). Among them they place contingency

theories, configuration theories, and Porter's 'five forces' model. They claim that these theories are not tautological because they (1) embed empirical contents (2) do not define 'fits' in terms of performance, (3) define fits as "moderation, mediation, matching, and so on" (59). However, we claim that (1) as long as theories deal with fits, constructs persist within one dualism or the other. Besides, the means-ends schema resurfaces in post-positivism even when constructs define "patterns in the data which would conclusively refute the theory" (Priem & Butler, 2001: 62). Dualism then can emerge because empiricism prevails over theory. Drawing on the critiques against Popper's postpositivism, we claim that the definition of change patterns in theoretical constructs is not the alternative solution to tautology and the means-ends approach. A pre-defined pattern, in fact, removes other unforeseen patterns. Above all, post-positivism does not consider that practice in-itself is the main mechanism of change. A change constructs focusing on practice in-itself instead points that that there are no objects and subjects are only temporary outcomes of interaction. It therefore rejects both tautological and non-tautological means-ends' theories, as well as any kind of dualism.

Our previous arguments underline that the focus on opportunities does not in itself support the claim that entrepreneurship is a perspective different from strategic management if both fields are rooted in the means-ends' schema. We suggest that instead entrepreneurship ought to search for its unique identity through an epistemological turnaround. For this purpose we offer the alternative arguments of pragmatism.

Before, however, we explore recent literature trends in this directions that confirm the inadequacy of the means-ends' schema for exploring change and creativity. This literature is opening up do research on the field of entrepreneurship. By exploring some of this literature we show how it avoids tautology, but we also wish to show that dualisms may resurface in change perspective when the epistemological awareness is loosened.

New trends in entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship research is today parting from the tradition to explore new approaches (Alvarez & Barney, 2007; Rindova & Fombrun, 2001; Sarasvathy, Dew, Read, & Wiltbank, 2008; Cooper & Park, 2008; Rindova, Barry, & Ketchen, 2009; Schindehutte and Morris, 2009). This move is occurring in different ways to affirm change perspectives. Dimov, for instance, addresses entrepreneurship from the view of interaction to overcome the reductionism of subjectivism. Rindova, Barry, and Ketchen instead focus on the genesis of “new ideas, new things, new markets,”, while defining entrepreneurship as doing (478). They also take the view of entrepreneurs’ emancipation as driven by personal feelings and motivations (479), thus rejecting the means-ends assumption that what is not rational must be irrational. Schindehutte and Morris offer a natural science perspective of complexity. They assume that opportunities are generated as self-organization of two opposite interacting ‘nondecomposable’ (253) entities, exploration and exploitation. Therefore they also assume the primacy of interaction. All this literature addresses new research path, but often it persists within rationalism, or does not account for the subjective side of interaction.

Dimov, for instance, opposes subjectivism by placing mental ‘unpolished’ ideas at the beginning of entrepreneuring, which interaction will transform in developed clear ideas which then can be implemented. Thus he accounts for the action of generating opportunities which become clear objectives of implementation activities. Then the perspective of interaction becomes useless. is driven by two incommensurable epistemologies. Besides, Dimov’s construct assumes that the search of opportunities is driven by environmental uncertainty (714), according to cognitivism. Thus the interaction approach is disconfirmed by the hierarchical relevance of developed ideas and the environment. Opportunities then become exogenous and therefore given as within the perspective of rationalism.

Rindova, Barry, and Ketchen strongly address the need to overcome rationalism. They explicitly claim that opportunities are created, rather than searched (482). Besides, they depart

from the means-ends schema by addressing entrepreneuring as emancipation as well as the creation of opportunities through destructions and the amplification of cracks. Thus they point to the interaction between the entrepreneur and the environment. Most importantly, they challenge the tradition of entrepreneurship by addressing the need to explore change through a change ontology. Thus, their work represents a milestone in the search of a consistent approach to entrepreneuring.

However, by exalting entrepreneur's power to breaking-up from authority and breaking-up constraints, despite their theoretical aim, they open up the way to subjectivism. This is confirmed when Rindova, Barry, and Ketchen suggest that entrepreneurship would benefit from exploring both "the abundance of evidence about diversity and richness in entrepreneurial motivations (478)", as well as when they address that "entrepreneurial research has paid little attention to how wishes for autonomy, expression of personal values, and making a difference in the world can be accomplished" (478). This emphasis on entrepreneur's action is attenuated when they underline that a change perspective must escape "the default individualist assumptions derived from the disciplines of psychology and economics that have informed [entrepreneurship] (481). Along this line they invite to explore both "the deeply individualist (and individuating) and deeply social (and change creating) aspects of entrepreneuring" (481). However, their arguments for a social approach remain weak since they rest on the hypothesis that while pursuing emancipation entrepreneurs affect society only because the wealth of society is embedded in their wishes. Thus, while addressing numerous arguments against the means-ends perspective, Rindova, Barry, and Ketchen miss that change occurs within a situated interaction between different actors which decides whether emancipation will occur and how. In the end they contradict their claim that the focus on entities [and therefore on identities] "limits research attention to the actions and processes that constitute the domain of entrepreneurship" (478).

Schindehutte & Morris instead challenge the means-ends schema by offering a complexity perspective on entrepreneuring (2009). They first justify their opposition to the Newtonian approach underlying that “many fundamental questions still lie at the heart of entrepreneurship” (243). While remarking that the Newtonian approach can only “prioritize permanence, stability, organization, and control over transience, flux, transformation, and uncertainty” (253), they invite researchers to address the dynamic and organic nature of entrepreneurship (249). claiming that entrepreneurship ought to be a science of turbulence and change. Drawing on the non-equilibrium thermodynamics (Ceruti, 1992), they suggest that creative entrepreneuring is enacted by small changes occurring at the margin of a system as mutations which slowly prevail over past dynamics thus bringing a system far from equilibrium. Entrepreneuring then can be explained within a nonlinear self-organizing dynamics.

However, by removing the subject, complexity can provide only a reductionist view of change. As a natural science this epistemology has no place for emancipation. It explores objective entities and self-referential change mechanisms. In fact, Schindehutte and Morris address the self-organization of the interaction between exploration and exploitation through the logic of the thermodynamics of non-equilibrium. Intersubjectivity and the subject-object relation are therefore decentralized. By dealing with abstract variables and abstract change mechanisms they also disregard that practice in-itself within a change perspective is itself a change mechanism. As a result, complexity offers an overly intellectualized theory of entrepreneurship which does not account for the entrepreneur. We claim that the focus on the subject-environment mediacy is a promising alternative perspective for thinking of entrepreneuring by rescuing the subject while accounting for objectivity. We claim that this approach can be effectively represented by the metaphysics of pragmatism.

The foundations of Mead’s pragmatism

Mead's pragmatism overcomes the reductionism of objectivism, as that of subjectivism by assuming the primacy of the subject-environment interaction. As theory of creative action it provides a consistent approach to entrepreneurship which in no way impinges in the assumptions of strategic management. Finally, by following the action of the entrepreneur within a situation, it provides a theory of practice whose main creative mechanism is practice in-itself.

Pragmatism therefore enables us to point out that entrepreneurial strategies, visions, and ideas defined before action represent the dualism of the object according to the assumptions of the means-ends approach. It reveals that novel opportunities are objective and external to the daily action of the organization. Human action then can only occur as the search of means to pursue ends. In other words, clear strategies and ideas hamper human creativity. In other words, according to pragmatism, the means-ends view of entrepreneurship has nothing to say about how opportunities are generated while the subject interacts with the environment in a given situation. Therefore it creates its main difference with strategic management only by assuming the primacy of: (1) discovering opportunities through the ability to fathom the environment; (2) and turning them into clear goals to be implemented through established rules, routines, and procedures. In other words, the traditional theory of entrepreneurship mixes up the dynamic search of opportunities with the routinary action of implementation. Entrepreneurship then relates only to the search process, while daily action is deprived of the power of creating the real. Entrepreneurship therefore occurs as discontinuity, as it is acclaimed in strategic management. Daily action does not encompass the generation of opportunities which still follows the routes of rationalism and cognitivism, according to the means-ends epistemology. Thus entrepreneurship roots its main difference with strategic management in focusing on this search while ignoring that: (1) even strategic management cannot avoid the search for opportunities; (2) explicating the search of opportunities has the

same meaning for entrepreneurship and strategic management as long as it drives to the definition of clear goals before action; (3) the search of objective opportunities located in the environment is embedded in cognitivism and therefore in the means-ends schema.

Pragmatism instead provides a perspective of creative action which avoids objectivism by focusing on how practical situated problems enact the action of the practitioner within a situated intersubjectivity and subject-object/environment relation. Its unit of analysis is the event which represents how these interactions constitute the self, the body, the object, and the subsequent problem. According to pragmatism, the environment is embedded in the event. It is the other subject and object which constitute the interactive situation. Opportunities therefore are no longer displaced in the external environment, but created in the situation while dealing with a problem. Strategies then become entrepreneurial because they are embedded in the evolving of the creative event. They are revealed by the event. Besides, they are strategies in action and always incomplete, since the solution of a problem does not produce stability, but rather new different problems which imply the construction of a new strategy. Pragmatism therefore can inspire a theory of entrepreneurship different from strategic management because it ensures a meta capability of creating opportunities which cannot be hampered by necessary implementation activity.

By overcoming the dualisms of the object and the subject Mead's pragmatism provides the basis for clearing the field of entrepreneurship from both views that novelty is determined by strategies and ideas separated from ongoing action, and alternatively by the entrepreneur's farsightedness, vitality, and ability. By drawing on Darwin and Piaget's biology, as well as on anthropology, Mead's pragmatism affirms "the principle of [its] reafference in biology, and in the anthropological approaches" (1985: 67-68) how it "collapses the empiricist, realist, and transcendentalist explanations" (153) while accounting for "the *per se* reflective character of the perception of 'things'" (Joas, 1985: 153, italics included). Through this epistemological

blend Mead disavows the blind biological law of self-regulation and its striving for survival (in Joas, 1985: 40) assuming that psyche, consciousness, and self-reflectivity are essential ingredients of the learning process occurring in the biological sensorimotor movement. Thus Mead's pragmatism suggests that a pragmatic theory of entrepreneurship focuses on the creative construction of opportunities through the mediation between entrepreneur's aims, perceptions, and expectations and the ongoing situation. Thus pragmatism confirms that the entrepreneur remains a key actor of the entrepreneurial process. However, it also underlines that the entrepreneur acts within the event by mediating with aims, perceptions, and expectations of other subjects and objects forming a unique situation. Then the practice of mediation, rather than some kind of abstract self-regulated mechanism, becomes the key transformative determinant of the situation. The nature of the event now appears open to change because the output of mediation is unforeseeable, whether or not a clear objective has been defined before action.

Contrary to strategic management, entrepreneuring is not rooted in clear objectified goals placed before action. Pragmatism sustains that the bodily action is the primary way to deal with problems and follow horizons. This approach leaves always open the possibility for change thus providing new epistemological roots for a clear distinction between entrepreneurship and strategic management.

Mead's principle of refference implies that sensory motor movement and the self become commensurable. Mead suggests to reject the introspective approach to psychology and redefine the self as "the capacity for intentional action formed in the structures of intersubjective praxis" (in Joas, 1985: 145). Self-reflectivity, perception, and intuition then become the primitive corporeal impulses to expression and a movement of the body affected by emotional tensions. Thus, the individual self becomes empirical. Consequently, refference implies that entrepreneurial aims are inseparable from past events and future action and its

horizon. Subjective aims, perception, and intuition therefore cannot be formed in a void of relations, but appear themselves as experiences in the world.

Mead's pragmatism soon evolves into the perspective of *symbolic interaction*. Thus action nexus not only produce body, mind, and the object, but also the meaning of the whole event. This perspective explores the *minutiae* of interaction while removing unseen remnants of solipsism. Therefore, it provides the foundations of a theory of entrepreneurship free from any interference with strategic management.

Symbolic interaction defines the event as meaning-constituting social interactions. Mead now strives to provide a meaning of language consistent with pragmatism. According to Mead, therefore language "is to be understood only as it functions in cooperative physical actions, and not on the model of expressional intentions" (1985: 115). Language and the speech thus become themselves empirical gestures, while the meaning of intersubjectivity is socially constructed within a conversation of gestures. Meaning is also "embedded in the conditions present in our movements" (in Joas, 1985: 96-97) so that its separation from action appears as a deviating process.

Then *symbolic interaction* assumes that the meaning is created by the event rather than before action. According to Mead, there is no meaning before and outside interaction since it is embedded in the structure of the event. This new view of pragmatism reaffirms that ideas, opportunities and strategies and their meaning are represented by the event. In other words, *symbolic interaction* confirms that all that counts for the practitioner is the practical solution of problems occurring by relating with a situation which encompasses the relevant environment. *Symbolic interaction* also readdresses that each event is creative. Mead underlines that creativity stems from: (1) the novelty of the problem generated by the previous event; (2) the impossibility to stabilize both gestures and responses between actors and the meaning of the all act. According to Mead, the actors of a situation meet to create a shared meaning. However, the interaction remains creative because gestures can still produce

surprising actions in the space of self-reflectivity before the coordination is accomplished. In the last period of his working life, while dealing with temporality, Mead offers a new rationale of the event's creativity. He claims that each event is a new event because it cannot reproduce the past, but only intermingle it with the present thus constructing a different past which, within his presenting epistemology, he defines a present past (in Joas, 1985: 176). This intrinsic creativity of the event therefore confirms that entrepreneurship is the science which explore how entrepreneurial firms remain open to the continuous production of novelty.

Present temporality also shows that, being rooted on the sensorimotor process, a chain of events cannot be linear, while each event is a conditioned transition. Mead therefore suggests to explore pragmatism by focusing on each event as well as on its evolution in relation to situated conditions.

The focus of entrepreneurship on creative event confirms that pragmatism can be the foundation of a theory of entrepreneurship different from strategic management which accounts for the generation of novelty in the continuum. This pragmatist perspective suggests that practice-in-itself rather than strategies creates the problem and orients action, while centralized strategies sooner or later lose their adherence to reality.

The bulk of Mead's work provides the theory of *symbolic interaction* which explores intersubjectivity as a meaning-constituting process. *Symbolic interaction* explores the mechanisms of interaction by providing a new language and new concepts to explain entrepreneurship. Above all it addresses the mechanism of the *inhibition of impulses*. Thus self-reflectivity appears not only in the perception as primordial impulses to expression, but also within the interaction as a way to make "an evaluation of the act before the coordination that leads to the particular reaction has been completed" (in Joas, 1985: 102) to gain "the consciousness of the relation between one's own actions and the responses of other to them"

(in Joas, 1985:105). In other words, the *inhibition of impulses* opens up in pragmatism the way to avoid an idiosyncratic approach to the understanding of other's gestures. Therefore it provides the rationale for a process of anticipation and a role-taking which turns intentionality and gesture into a social action. Furthermore, the *inhibition of impulses* accounts for how novelty arises within the event by avoiding idiosyncratic assessment. Finally, it confirms that meaning is not self-evident, but the outcome of a social construction.

Through the *inhibition of impulses* Mead's pragmatism suggests that entrepreneuring occurs only when the subject possesses this capability, so that the sensorymotor dialogic fosters creativity rather than mere learning. In other words, pragmatism suggests that the interaction becomes an entrepreneurial game only if the relating subject is able to exercise the *inhibition of impulses*. Thus, a pragmatist theory of entrepreneurship can account for the work of the entrepreneur, for his attributes, perceptions, expectations and motives, though outcomes and the meaning of the event cannot be directly drawn back to them. As a way to produce the subject's consciousness about the all event, the *inhibition of impulses* allows the subject to monitor the interaction and to think of new interaction strategies. The *inhibition of impulses* affirms therefore that intentionality is at work in each event. Once again it underlines that entrepreneuring occurs only when self-reflectivity is not driven to monitor the efficient implementation of any kind of a priori universal prescription through routines and procedures, but only when it addresses the creation of a new meaning.

Mead provides a further understanding of the dynamic of the event by dealing with the constitution of the object. He undertakes this work when he recognizes that role-taking, "*which has been developed in social intercourse, is also utilized in individual dealings with non-social objects* (n Joas: 153). Then he can explain the subject-object interaction by exhuming both the theory of perception of the objects and the arguments of *symbolic interaction*. The perception of the object as primordial corporeal impulse becomes the starting

point for distinguishing in the subject-object interaction a first stage that of seeing - which allows a partial understanding of the object from afar. Mead claims that a most accurate knowledge calls for a further physical manipulation stage. According to Mead, then the physical object is constituted “when the eyes regard that which the hands are seizing and when the hands can reach for what the eyes have caught sight of” (Mead, in Joas: 1985: 150). Mead claims that the object is constituted when the subject takes in himself the role of the material object. Mead claims that the object has an inside and an inner and the capability to resist to its constitution through mere perception. According to Mead, the object resists to its constitution as a mean for the solution of the problem. This resistance reveals the object’s inner and prevents the body-object isomorphism. Now two personalities face one another and both can play the gesture-response game as anticipation role-taking and *inhibition of impulses* which for the object has become resistance.

Mead excludes that this contact generates a subject-object fusion. He claims that instead the subject takes “the attitude to act as the physical thing will act” (Mead, in Joas: 1985: 155) while inhibiting his own impulses, thus abiding with the physical object to free it from his instinctually compulsive incorporation into his need-satisfying actions (Mead, in Joas, 1985: 149). Then the subject experiences the object’s independent resistance. Mead also warns that “the essential thing is that the individual himself ... takes the attitude of resisting his own grasping, and that the attained preparation for the manipulation is the result of [a] cooperation of attitudes” (Mead, in Joas: 1985: 156). Mead, however, adds that during the role-taking process, there is a moment when the subject and the object’s identities coincide. Then while assuming the role of the object, the subject takes the object’s attitude becoming itself an object. Mead therefore claims that even the subject must resist to the grasping of the object and to his objectification. Thus, Mead’s pragmatism shows that within the event occurs a double resistance, which becomes itself a powerful source of the creativity of the event.

The space of resistance and counter-resistance together with the capability to inhibit impulses then become critical sources of the creativity of the event which greatly enhances the possibility of creating opportunities well beyond the objective opportunities offered by a means-ends approach.

Hans Joas (2005), however, claims that Mead's pragmatism does not address how the problem is generated when the situation must be created anew or through the destruction of present relations. Now, therefore we continue the research for a perspective of entrepreneuring by analyzing the constitution of the problem through Joas' pragmatism.

Joas' pragmatism

According to Joas, Mead's pragmatism must bring further ahead the argument of creativity. He draws this possibility in the work *The Creativity of Action* (1996) following the historical attempt of sociology to win the utilitarian paradox: "if to assume that free will exists and therefore to assert that goals vary at random, or conversely to assume that goals do not vary at random, at the cost of no longer being able to find a place for free choice and individual decisions in its conceptual framework" (Parsons, in Joas, 2006: 11). Following this history Joas confirms that pragmatism overcomes dualism by integrating natural science and intersubjectivity, but underlines that Mead's pragmatism assumes that the problem which enacts action is given, thus missing that the subject is instead actively involved in its creation. Joas claims that before action the subject defines an *ante actu* pre-reflective goal according to a holistic view of the following interaction which constitutes the self, the other, and the object. Thus he can sustain that creativity in the definition of the problem is the action of the subject and arises from his impulses, rather than their inhibition. To build this view Joas draws on Sanders' 'abduction', as "the production of new hypotheses in a creative act" (in Joas, 2006: 135). Dewey's pragmatism instead inspires him through both the emphasis on the need for the additional stage of problem definition and the rejection of the view that the

starting problem is produced by “a simple collision between habitual actions and reality” (2006: 131). Dewey also suggests that the self has a holistic nature embedded in human ideals which “take hold of us and are at the root of our individual wishes and goals” (in Joas, 2006: 143). Joas maintains this holistic approach to sustain that the subject forms *ante actu* pre-reflective goals independently from interactions. Joas also draws on James to address the body-mind unity in the definition of the problem by assuming that the body can be constituted through a holistic psychological representation which integrate the cognitive and the affective sides of the question (177). Then he defines subjective pre-reflective goals in global holistic terms as a self-reflective corporeal and experiential activity (154). Joas’ pre-reflective goals also draw on Dewey’s ‘ends-in-view’ which underline that “the categories ‘ends’ or ‘goals’ and ‘means’ [are] far less self-evident than they appear to be” and must be distinguished according to the ‘presentistic’ view that the results of a present action still lie in the future (in Joas, 2006: 154). Joas further adds that goals are always undefined and can only enable the planning of immediate action. By distinguishing goals from outcomes Joas makes a large space for subjectivity. However, he warns that *ante actu* pre-reflective goals do not turn pragmatism into subjectivism since goals “may place us in situations, but do not themselves provide a comprehensive answer to the challenges of these situations.....” (161). According to Joas, intentions “may have been the decisive factors behind the particular plan, but they certainly do not determine the actual course that action takes” (162). Subjectivity instead sustains the definition of the problem as the way the subject opposes one’s motives, aspiration and tendencies to one’s perceptions of the world. (Joas, 2006: 158). Drawing on Dewey, Joas further suggests that after the definition of the problems interactions occur as mediation between the subject’s aims and the situation’s fixed aims, adding, however, that fixed aims in flexible interactions can always be either discussed or refused. To deal with intersubjectivity and the constitution of the object Joas then fully embraces Mead’s practical pragmatism.

Joas' pragmatism widens the possibility for pragmatism to explain the flow of experiences that generate the problems and constitute the subject, the body, and the object. By addressing how the subject defines the problem before action he provides the opportunity to explore the creativity of the subject and therefore the work of the entrepreneur. His pragmatism therefore reconciles the evidence that the entrepreneur is key for the firm's success with the need to avoid subjectivism. Thus he provides the theoretical space to explore his role as a determinant of the realization of the high potential of new and old relations. We later address this arguments by exploring the details of entrepreneurial start-ups.

Joas provides a further understanding of pragmatism by addressing change as an experiential transition. For this purpose he draws on Winnicott's psychology which assumes that the constitution of reality is a process affective in nature. Consequently, he suggests that change occurs through transitional objects or transitional experiences which make the actor "confident enough to risk a step out of his secure surroundings into the world, or to approach the threshold of the frightening world of dreams, without panicking (Joas, 1996: 165). Through both the definition of the problem and the transitional experience Joas provides a glimpse on how the event stands within history between the origin of change and after the event. He implicitly addresses that a further understanding of pragmatism can arise from or a deep understanding of these two process, given that the definition of the problem is itself an experience, while the transitional experience may be more than a psychological self-containment. Through the analysis of entrepreneurial stories we later describe this flow of experiences and how they define the entrepreneurial process. Before, we introduce Shotter's rhetorical-responsive theory as a perspective which provides a further key contribution in this direction (1993).

The *imaginary*

Shotter's theory is rooted in practical hermeneutics. It is defined as a rhetorical-responsive approach to conversations. It assumes that "we must speak with an awareness of the possibility that others around us would challenge our claims" (6). In other words, Shotter suggests that we talk by justifying claims and replying in advance to foreseeable challenges. Thus conversation appears consistent with the dialogical relation of Mead's gesture-response. However, he also assumes that conversations occur in the unordered hurly-burly of daily life (7). Therefore he addresses a situation which calls always for the creation of new meanings. We claim that the intertwining of Shotter's theory, Mead's interaction and Joas' definition of the problem can provide a further understanding of creativity and entrepreneuring as embedded in past experience and oriented towards the not-yet real future and a *horizon*. Shotter suggests that conversations are embedded in the subject's background, which according to him, is "what we think of as ... the nonexistent, the impossible, the extraordinary as well as ... a whole range of things we do not even notice – things, events and situations which ... are rendered rationally-*invisible* to us; that is, things which our ways of perceiving, acting, talking, and evaluating *fail* to make visibly-rational to us and thus amenable to rational discourse and debate" (38). Shotter then confirms Joas' view that at the origin of action there are no clear goals. However, by addressing this background, he underlines that, behind action there are rather than pre-reflective goals and immediate plans for action, tendencies and feelings which provide the event with a *horizon* subsisting above and beyond the event. This background anyway sustain the view that pre-reflective goals can never be clear. Above all the rhetorical-responsive moves the flow of events further back the definition of these goals. Shotter then explains the relation of this background with the event through the concept of the *imaginary*, since according to him there is nothing in the tradition that can define the nature this movement. Thus through the *imaginary* Shotter defines the transition from the background to the event as "what is not yet wholly 'real', but yet not

wholly ‘fictious’ either” (79). He also affirms that any well-formed “systematic discourse forming an *imagined picture* of the world “hold us captive” (89) and prevents “any possibility to formulate doubts about it, thus [giving rise] to a self-deceptive *ex post facto* fallacy (85). According to Shotter, instead the *imaginary* provides an ambiguous tool that can account for the ambiguity of the sensuous, feelingful, unordered daily background. Shotter then defines the *imaginary* properties as: (i) “incomplete, ongoing, on the way to be other than what they are – in short they are unimaginable and extraordinary; (ii) nonlocatable, either in space and time, but ... nonetheless hav[ing] ‘real’ attributes in the sense of functioning in people’s actions in enabling them to achieve *reproducible results* by the use of their socially sharable procedures; (iii) subsist[ing] only in people’s practices; (iv) exist[ing] ‘in’ the world only to the extent that [it]can play a part in people’s discourses” (90). The *imaginary* points out that pre-reflective goals are actually a partial way to address the definition of the problem since immediate plans for action have no *horizon*. By embedding the action of conversation in the flow of a background moving towards a *horizon*, it also opens up the boundaries of the event pointing to the opportunity to explore the experience that generates the problem beyond the abrupt definition of a plan for immediate action. It also addresses how the event create the future beyond the mere psychological dimension of the transitional experience.

Above all, the *imaginary* underlines a transcendental side of the immediate action. Shotter claims, in fact, that it is “a *sui generis* kind of knowledge” (40), prior to any other kind of knowledge”, which has a sensuous, practical-moral nature and does not produce ideas, but moves action through step-by step instructions linking people motives to their surroundings (42). Thus, the *imaginary* provides a persisting though ambiguous thread weaving events without determining it. The *imaginary* overarching nature then addresses transition beyond the present situation pointing to the continuity of change, against both the evolutionary approach and a view of change as discontinuity. The *imaginary* instead ensures the continuity

of change because while participating to the immediate event it undertakes its own transformation.

The *imaginary* addresses transition through its not-yet real side which points to what ‘might be’ through “step-by-step INSTRUCTIONS for noticing and making *differences* in the attempt to make sense of what is happening ...” (89). According to Shotter, this process creates “an artificial, intralinguistic or *imaginary* context ... for our own further activities” (93), while instructions “channel “one’s attention, select distinctive features and analyze and synthesize them... thus pointing to a whole range of things we do not even notice – things, events and situations which [...] have remained ‘rationally *invisible*’ to us” (38). This process confirms that the *imaginary* cannot be given once for all. Like pre-reflective goals, it enacts interaction, but within the situation it undertakes a mediation which while creating temporary outcomes transforms its non-fictional side while addressing new not-yet real perspectives. Shotter’s rhetorical-responsive theory therefore provides a unique opportunity to deal with entrepreneuring by further widening the focus on creativity, rather than on strategic management. We later intertwine pragmatism and Shotter’s constructionism by experimenting how together these perspectives enlighten the stories of entrepreneurial firms. Since now we can address one key difference between pragmatism and Shotter’s *imaginary*. By drawing on postmodernism, in fact, Shotter locates joint action in a middle place where actors become indistinguishable. The *imaginary* therefore is that of a community which Shotter usually addresses as ‘people’. Pragmatism instead describes the interaction as a communication activity between actors. Body, self, and the object are then connected by excluding their fusion. This is affirmed in the analysis of the body-mind relation, but is also affirmed when through the inhibition of impulses which is meant to allow the independent constitution of the other, be it the subject or the object. Joas also underlines that the definition of the problem is a cognitive human action. To gain the consistency of Shotter’s *imaginary* with pragmatism we

must also think of a subjective *imaginary*. This is possible because actually Shotter roots it in evolutionary psychology then applies it mechanically to joint action. Most of Shotter's arguments about the *imaginary* draw on the theory of language and how the meaning emerges from the subject's life experience. Drawing on Vygotsky, for instance, Shotter addresses the mediating subjective experience of relating thoughts and words, which is also found in Mead's pragmatism (44). He draws on Vygotsky to affirm that subjectivity is consistent with constructionism because "even, when all alone, the 'inner' process in which one's vague thoughts are formulated ... involves events similar to the 'outer' transactions between people (Vygotsky, in Shotter, 2003: 44). This view reminds Joas' definition of the problem which occurs by imagining future relations. Shotter's *imaginary* therefore can be reattributed to the subject making the *imaginary* consistent with Mead and Joas' pragmatism. Shotter, however, misses the emergence of the self from practical conversations and interactions. He also misses how the subject defines the problem. In fact, he assumes that "people behave as if they had to conform to a socially (and linguistically) objective reality existing independently of any of the individuals involved" (8). Thus the need for understanding subjectivity is definitely removed while the *imaginary* becomes a social discourse. Nevertheless, the concept of *imaginary* widens the reservoir of the basic concepts which can build the arguments for a theory of entrepreneuring. Shotter's practical hermeneutics and the *imaginary* can play a key role just to explore the background of the subject when the other subject has not yet been encountered or when his relation with the situation is temporarily suspended. As a key concept of the creativity of the subject, the *imaginary* can be a foothold to talk about the role of the entrepreneur. It may also provide a useful alternative to the definition of entrepreneurial strategies as objective paradigms which hamper creativity while making entrepreneurship templates epistemologically inconsistent. The *imaginary* instead points to a concept of entrepreneurial strategy opened to change, therefore always incomplete and in the way of

becoming other than what it is. This approach to strategy opens the way to a theory of entrepreneuring consistent with the theory of creative action.

Exploring events

We discuss the theory of creative action by considering the story of three Italian SM firms to highlight how through their creative action entrepreneurs turned start-ups into successful medium companies. Through these stories we highlight how the decision to start a business arises, as well as how entrepreneuring occurs soon after this decision. Anecdotes of these stories exemplify a further theoretical discussion which addresses the flow of events from entrepreneurs' background while intertwining the previous perspectives. By analyzing stories we do not mean to engage in empirical research to either confirm or disconfirm theories and prescriptions. Instead, we aim to experiment how theory and practice enable/constrain each other. By addressing these entrepreneurial stories we also address the theory of entrepreneurship.

It is now clear that moving from the means-ends schema to pragmatism implies a turnaround of the research object. Within the first perspective research provides abstract paradigms for guiding and monitoring the achievement of given, clear purposes. By drawing on pragmatism instead we aim to explore "how practitioners act the way they do (Giddens, 1985), knowing that goals do not coincide with outcomes, but themselves arise from the unforeseeable mediation between subjects and objects (Joas, 1996). Through our firms' stories we now explore two events: (1) how practitioners produce the goal to start a new business and (2) how immediately after they act to set up from scratch a business logic. These events describe two sides of the same definition of the problem, which therefore allow to deeply explore the phenomenon of entrepreneurship and if it can provide new general views of entrepreneuring which can apply in other situations. By intertwining practice-in-itself and pragmatism we show the complexity of these events and their crucial relevance for addressing the appearance

of entrepreneurial opportunities within a theory of entrepreneurship consistent with a metaphysics of change. This theory-practice intertwining in single events further widens our approach by revealing steps in the process which in the general theory remain still unnoticed. Thus they also provide new meanings to the work of entrepreneuring. Our stories show that pre-reflective goals are just one aspect of the definition of the problem. They point out that by focusing on them we lose their relation with the subject's background. Above all, they reveal that between the subject's background and the definition of immediate plans for action there is a 'first change' that creates a non-fictional opportunity for change. Thus practice-in-itself shows a new process of the defining the problem. It addresses that opportunities arise as a transitional experiment which drives to a start-up. The definition of pre-reflective goals therefore appears embedded in the 'first change'. Stories also address the events 'soon after the first change', which differ from the 'first change' because they create a transitional strategic project while realizing operations of the new business. The stories show that this latter kind of events shows the creation of novelty through the experimentation of new relations which therefore can be also interrupted. Finally these stories show how the personal *imaginary* of the subject turns into the entrepreneur's *imaginary* of the business in the process of creating these new relations which make visible policies and strategies. We interviewed the founders of three firms, Comelit s.p.a., Sbafo s.n.c. and Gras Calce s.p.a. which are located in Northern Italy where most of the Italian GDP is produced. We now provide a short synthesis of the stories, while the details will be recalled while discussing the theory-practice relation within each event.

Comelit spa originally produced and commercialized valve interphones. It was one of the many small firms that intercepted undemanding consumers. But in 1956 an unexpected technological innovation changed the destiny of the firm, turning it into a successful firm growing at a high speed so as to produce at the end of 2009 a turnover of 53 million € of

which the 50% came from international markets. Today Comelit's strategy is oriented by the policy of a continuous product innovation, as well as by its expansion towards international markets and the diversification in contiguous industry segments. The story of this firm was told us by Mr. Brasi who was the main actor of the first turnaround and is today the President. *Sbafo snc* is a restaurant in a small Italian village established in 2008. The entrepreneur, Mr. Bosio, started this business after selling his share of a fancy ice-cream shop which himself had started and driven to success until then. Mr. Bosio then created a business formula which he intended to reproduce nationally in franchising. In 2009, at the time of our interview, when the economic recovery was not yet on the *horizon*, he had fully realized his restaurant, the business formula, and the first franchising store. He was then struggling to find a partner for its replication. Today, one year after our interview, Mr. Bosio has informed us that during 2010 a third restaurant was opened in New York and a fourth one within a new Italian shopping mall in a Northern Italian city. *Grace Calce spa* was founded in 1967 by the Cereda brothers, who were already engaged in the construction industry. They wished to simplify their bricklayers' work of kneading the lime by centralizing and automating the process. After creating the production site, inventing from scratch the production plants, and testing the effectiveness of the idea, they slowly discovered a mass market for their product which encompassed every dockyard of the construction/ restructuring industry, as well as every potential user of the lime. The company therefore grew at a high speed while defining a strategy of continuous innovation, and sophisticated marketing and research policies. In the end the economics of *Gras Calce* surpassed their construction business enhancing the Cereda brothers contribution to the economy of their territory. These stories enable us to provide our theoretical arguments with the contents of entrepreneurial activity. Thus the same analysis advances our approach to creative action together with the theory of entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship through 'the first change'

Drawing on our interviews we turn back to Joas' pragmatism to widen his arguments about the definition of the problem. Our stories show that pre-reflective goals are only the final outcome of a complex transitional process oriented by the entrepreneur's background and producing the practical evidence that a strategic change is possible. This event is the 'first change'. In Comelit the 'first change' was Mr. Brasi's incidental invention of a new interphone together with some laboratory workers. Sbafo's 'first event' instead was Mr. Bosio's experience of running the school refectory. Indeed, since ever Mr. Bosio had unconsciously prepared himself to an entrepreneurial leap, but he opened a first restaurant only after the 'first change' experience in a school refectory. Finally, Grace Calce's 'first change' is represented by the mechanization of the lime mortar production to ease the bricklayers' workers. These stories show that before the definition of pre-reflective goals the 'first change' provides the opportunity to start a business. They underline that the 'first change' occurs as intersubjectivity and object-subject interactions. In other words, they witness that opportunities for starting a new business are the outcome of a creative mediation, rather than objects located somewhere in the environment. Thus, while confirming Joas' view that problems are not given, these anecdotes reveal that pre-reflective goals are not the cognitive origin of problems, but arise after the 'first change' and in relation to it. Finally, these anecdotes address that pre-reflective goals are themselves transitional events because: (1) they are the divide between the creation of an opportunity and the concrete commitment in developing it. Once defined, the entrepreneurial project starts as entrepreneurs' search of new actors in the environment and the testing of the meaning of their mediation; (2) pre-reflective goals mediate between the undefined *horizon* of the decision to start a new business and each equally undefined immediate first step in the creation of the new business. Joas' definition of the problem now appears embedded in the 'first change' event, which by creating a non-fictional opportunity for change defines a firm origin of the problem, thus sparing the risk of

an endless and a smoky search of it in the subject's background. The 'first change' instead embeds the background transforming it while creating the opportunity to start a new business, thus providing the only past reference needed to pursue the following pre-reflective goals. As made of subject-object interactions, the 'first event', challenges Joas' view that in the definition of the problem subjectivity prevails over mediation. However, subjectivity still works if it redefined in relation to 'first change'. This event cannot deny that both, the choice to start a business and the definition of pre-reflective goals, are in entrepreneurs' hand. On the other side, the environment actors that will be involved in the new business have not yet been met and therefore have no say in the starting process. Besides, 'first change' interactions show only an opportunity which may never meet entrepreneurs' will to turn it into the choice of starting a new business.

Subjectivity in established businesses instead works for the continuity of interactions. It is not meant to define the problem. According to Mead and Joas, it works when the subject suspends the interaction to assess the situation and choose the strategy for managing the interaction. In other words, this subjectivity does not produce opportunities. Daily management instead is creative only because of the uncertainty of the subject- object mediation. This mediation affirms that nothing is obvious in the daily firm-environment relation. We now turn back to our view of the origin of a new business to further explore how the 'first event' flows from the entrepreneur's background through the 'first change' up to the definition of pre-reflective goals. Shotter's rhetorical-responsive approach suggests that this flow can occur as the transformation of subject's *imaginary* into the *imaginary* of a new enterprise through its involvement in the creation of a opportunity.

Previously, while intertwining the *imaginary* and pragmatism, we related pre-reflective goals directly to the subject's *imaginary*. Thus, while acknowledging that defining the *imaginary* is a life experience, we missed that the transformation of this background into a pre-reflective

goal was itself a life experience. The ‘first event’ now shows the most relevant side of this mediating experience. It tells that this event carries forward the subject’s *imaginary* while changing it, thus constructing a new *imaginary* which produces the strategic choice to start a new business before defining a pre-reflective goal. Our anecdotes confirm that pre-reflective goals are not directly related to entrepreneurs’ background. Mr. Brasi’s invention of the new interphone, for instance, has surely to do with his passion for experimenting with technologies, as well as with how his soccer profession has forged his temper. However, this background does not explain Mr. Brasi’s invention, since this would ever happen if he had not met the laboratory workers. Sbafo’s story provides a stronger argument on the same issue since Mr. Bosio dreamed of running a franchising business in the restaurant field since ever. We know that despite so he established instead the ice-cream shop which never was a premise for starting a restaurant. Only after the experience of the ‘first change’ his dream became an opportunity and his *imaginary* of becoming a national entrepreneur could be a real possibility. These stories instead underline that the definition of a pre-reflective goal can occur only after the experience of the ‘first change’, as well as after the choice to turn it into a new business. They also show that before the ‘first change’ the *imaginary* can only represent the subject’s personal attitudes and *horizon*, while within the ‘first change’ interactions turn it into the *imaginary* of creating a business. The same anecdotes finally confirm that the ‘first change’ can be followed by other mediating processes before the definition of pre-reflective goals. While in Sbafo, the ‘first change’ generated immediately the decision to establish the restaurant, in Comelit this could not happen until the owners envisaged the opportunity for change while involving Mr. Brasi in the change process. In Gras Calce instead the decision to build a plant followed immediately after the first positive experiment of preparing the lime mortar in advance and outside the building site. These anecdotes enable us to underline that the choice to start a business arises only if creativity is combined with the entrepreneurship

capability. Comelit's story shows that the 'first change' actually was not an entrepreneurial innovation, but a technical one. It therefore addresses that until technical and entrepreneurial innovation are separate no enterprise can be started. In other words, it suggests that start-ups occur only when the subject takes this entrepreneurial responsibility. The need for mediation processes confirms our view that Joas' pre-reflective goal is a partial explanation of the origin of goals. The concept of *imaginary* has further implications for the understanding of the 'first change'. We claim that by embedding the subject's *imaginary* the 'first change' takes also most of its properties. Thus, the *imaginary* provides the event with a *horizon* while the event provides the *imaginary* with new contents which in turn modify the *horizon* of both the event and the *imaginary*. Most transitional properties of the 'first change' can now be those of the *imaginary*. Therefore we can say of the 'first change' that being a transitional experience it is always incomplete, ongoing, on the way to be other than what it is, unimaginable and extraordinary, as well as 'real', and existing 'in' the world only to the extent that it can play a part in people's discourses (and actions). Above all, it can point to something other than and beyond itself, to a *horizon* that makes it 'open' to further actions" (Shotter: 39). The *imaginary's* properties further suggest that the 'first change' addresses the 'what would be' more than the 'what is'. Indeed Shotter confirms this accordance when he claims that the *imaginary* is found in the flowing of the situation. However, by following a practical hermeneutics, Shotter assumes the primacy of the discourse over action. Action then in his rhetorical-responsive approach becomes just a complement to the *imaginary*. Instead the 'first change' confirms the primacy of action. In Comelit the new interphone was created incidentally and through a laboratory experiment which Mr. Brasi carried out together with the laboratory workers who took his challenge. Sbafo and Gras Calce's 'first change' confirm that the creation of the opportunity for a strategic change appeared from an experimental transitional experience. Above all, the practical experience of the 'first change' shows the

materiality of the non-fictional side of the event. Thus, the material side of the 'first change' opportunity narrows the range of possibilities which in the background were potentially infinite. This event, in fact, provides the *imaginary* with a new content which defines in new ways its 'what would be'. Then the choice to start a new business and the definition of immediate plans for action appears embedded in the 'first change' event according to how this event has transformed the entrepreneurs' *imaginary*. Since the 'first change' is made of interactions, we can explain it also through Mead and Joas' arguments about the gesture-response interaction, resistance, the role-taking, the inhibition of the subject, and the constitution of the self and the material object. Mead's approach, however, contemplates ongoing events. It also thinks of the object as a given entity which reveals its own pre-existing 'inner' through the process of role-taking. In other words, Mead's view of the interaction does not contemplate the creation of opportunities as outcome of experimental relations. The 'first change' instead suggests that new opportunities are the outcome of experimental interactions which embed entrepreneur's background and his personal *imaginary* and *horizon*, but not always his business *imaginary*. In every instance anyway experimental interactions occur before the choice to start a business. This view of the definition of the problem confirms that pre-reflective goals are the outcome of a process which transcends the present time by addressing its relationship to a background as well as to a *horizon*. The analysis of the 'first change' therefore shows that the present event embeds a transcendence which is therefore the way to interweave events through space and time. The difference among our three stories offers a final view about the question of whether or not this first experience makes the player an entrepreneur. Mr. Brasi's story confirms the view of those who affirm that the subject who enacts the first change may not be entrepreneurs (Dimov, 2007: 718; Rindova, Barry, & Ketchen, 2009: 478). Nevertheless, the stories of the Cereda brothers and Mr. Bosio provide instead two examples of already engaged entrepreneurs who start a new business by enacting

a new 'first change'. These stories therefore point that this issue is irrelevant in the study of entrepreneuring, while it remains crucial to understand that a 'first change' without entrepreneurial capability cannot generate a new business. By addressing the search of opportunities our view of the 'first change' appears quite relevant for the theory of entrepreneuring. Drawing on our previous arguments, we can affirm that, according to pragmatism, there cannot exist objective opportunities within an objective environment, but only the transitional experience of a 'first event' which has a strong entrepreneurial potential. In other words, we claim that entrepreneurial opportunities are not given objects located somewhere in the environment. Instead, by revealing a real opportunity to undertake a strategic change, this transitional first experience is the only event that justifies the choice to engage in a dear process of transformation. Any other hypothetical way to search opportunities could be a pure imagination and an hazard.

Entrepreneuring 'soon after the first change'

We now analyze the events 'soon after the first change' and the issues they address about how entrepreneuring occurs when starting a new businesses or radically changing established ones. These events represent how entrepreneurs experiment new environmental relations that generate a web of strategic opportunities. They are also the first strategizing experience of the firm which produces the strategic core of the new business.

Together with the 'first change' these events form a unique process of defining the problem. As such they share the 'first change' nature and properties. Therefore they do not produce a clear strategy, but rather the first design of firm's organization and operations. In other words, the events following the 'first change' provide strategic a web of strategic opportunities for developing the 'first change' as transitional outcomes. Like the 'first change' and its embedded *imaginary*, this outcome is non-fictionous, but also addresses not-yet real future possibilities. Besides, it is always in the way of becoming other than what it is. The events

'soon after the 'first change' also share with the 'first event' the emphasis on subjectivity. They show how entrepreneurs interact with the environment to constitute and test the relation before establishing it. Subjectivity prevails because this testing can fail to meet entrepreneurs expectations, while then the entrepreneur must define new pre-reflective goals in order to orient the search of new actors in the environment. Only afterwards, when the structure of the situation is stabilized, the entrepreneur-environment mediation prevails to constitute the self and the object. Then subjectivity occurs as the temporary suspension of ongoing established relations only to manage them. This subjectivity, however, does not contemplate the failure of relations, nor does it account for a new definition of the problem. Above all, it does not produce transitional opportunities. This difference between experimental and established relations points out that while change is always driven by the object-subject difference, entrepreneuring instead occurs only when the definition of the problem is redefined by new relations and the creation of transitional objects.

This understanding of subjectivity is a key premise of analyzing the flow of events from the 'first change' up to the emergence of a first non-fictional web of strategic opportunities that have proved the feasibility of the start-up.

We now draw on our entrepreneurial stories to explore how the events 'soon after the first change' are rooted in the 'first change' as well as how they flow from it. Their analysis reveals that the non-fictional side of the 'first change' provides a unique character to them which can even be totally opposed, as in Comelit and Sbafo firms.

Comelit's story shows that this flow occurs as a continuous pervasive experimentation involving the innovation of the product as well as of any other management activity. The 'first change' choice to rebuild the interphone business embedded the *imaginary* that action would no longer be obvious. Thus it immediately provided a new understanding of ongoing interactions. The story recounts that this *imaginary* oriented the search of new components

suppliers and new assemblers in Japan. Besides, it underlines that entrepreneurs and the organization continually experimented new relations for the creation of new opportunities. This often implied the erasing of long-established firm-environment relations. Comelit capability to create new opportunities since then became the company's main competitive advantage. Thus entrepreneurs and managers matured a global view of the interphone business which turned the firm into a successful international company. In Sbafo Mr. Bosio's experience in the ice-cream shop and in the school refectory strongly affected his way to experiment the economics of the restaurant business in order to generate the operational standards of a business formula to be reproduced in franchising. Mr. Bosio's *imaginary* suggested that to develop a franchising business implied to minimize the need for future business innovation. These same stories, however, show that the 'first change' is only a bare protected experience. Within Comelit, both the invention of the transistor interphone and the choice to start a new business provided no instructions about how to move beyond the 'first change'. The interphone invention actually could not encompass in itself Mr. Brasi's aim to become the entrepreneur who would transform the interphone business.

Similarly, Mr. Bosio's engagement in the new restaurant activity did not occur as the mere application of acquired competences. In fact, the 'first change' experience in the school refectory was not risky. Mr. Bosio was, in fact, supported by the successful ice-cream business. Instead, starting the restaurant business instead was highly uncertain. It implied that Mr. Bosio abandoned the shelter provided by the ice-cream business in order to raise financial resources and to face competition. Above all, the 'first change' did not provide practical instructions about how to implement the franchising formula. In the course of our interview Mr. Bosio had already opened the second restaurant and was looking for a financial partner to bring the project further ahead. At that time he wished to open restaurants in Northern Italy. Instead in 2010 he opened a third restaurant in one shopping mall of New York. We can draw

on stories also to further explore the events flow from the ‘first change’ and how the following events generated the first non-fictional side of a strategy in action.

The primacy of subjectivity suggests that ‘first change’ can enter the immediate subsequent events only as the entrepreneur’s experience of it, whether or not it has generated a material transitional object. In other words, subjectivity in these events is the entrepreneur’s perception of the ‘first change’ and of how it highlights the objective of creating a new business. Consequently, it underlines that the entrepreneur’s search of new actors and the experimental interaction with them occurs as the ‘first change’-environment relation. This relation can be explored through Shotter’s rhetorical-responsive approach as the way these events transform the ‘first change’ non-fictional side while providing new not-yet real indications for further experimental action. Mead and Joas’ pragmatism instead explains interactions through the concept of ‘inhibition of impulses’ and as object-subject resistance. This latter analysis can be the opportunity to discuss where the commensurability of subjectivity and interaction lies and when interactions become more entrepreneurial than creative. We further address how the entrepreneurs-object relations can enact the search for new actors as well as how interactions create relating opportunities which form the first nucleus of an ever incomplete strategy. For this analysis we analyze a sequence of interactions after the ‘first change’ in Comelit’s story, as Mr. Brasi recounted them during the interview:

First interaction: *“We used to buy components from wholesalers ... Once, while I was supervising the warehouse activities, I read on a box ‘Made in Japan’ ...”*

Second interaction: *“So I decided to go in Japan to buy components from the producers.*

Third interaction: *“Shortly after I realized that buying and assembling in Japan would enhance our innovation opportunities and lower organization costs. So I approached a Japanese assembler and made this deal: ‘I give you the project, you buy components in your country and also assemble them. I will pay you components and labor’. Since I knew*

about the price of components, I could then lower assembly costs. 'If the cost was 10 we gave assemblers just 11.... We realized that it was better to move abroad the assembly function itself. We had already started looking for new subcontractors a bit far from firms' neighborhoods in Northern Italy ... then we went in the Far East....'

The first two interactions show a subject-object relation and its outcome – the change of suppliers. The third interaction instead recounts how Mr. Brasi decentralized Comelit assembly function in Japan. Both interactions confirm Mead's view of the constitution of the object, that is, how the outcome arose from Mr. Brasi's encounter with the components box. This description addresses that the entrepreneur moved beyond previous perceptions of the object. Through Mr. Brasi's 'touching' this object could reveal its 'inner' in a new way. According to Mead, the subject-object physical relation constituted the object because of the entrepreneur's capability to inhibit his own impulses. The third interaction further adds that the entrepreneur resisted to the grasping of the object since Mr. Brasi not only changed the firm's suppliers but also realized that decentralizing the assembly process in Japan could become a great opportunity to enhance both its production efficiency and the opportunity for future product innovation. However, anecdotes recount that the entrepreneur-object encounter was a new relation and in turn generated other relations. They also underline that the firm-suppliers relation changed because Mr. Brasi brought the 'first change' experience in it. Then his 'touching' constituted the unseen 'inner' of the object and consequently the possibility for new relations with other environmental actors. The entrepreneur therefore did not manage the continuity of a relation, but its change. These anecdotes confirm that Mead's pragmatism misses the definition of a start-up problem and therefore ignores that entrepreneuring is rooted in the construction of new relationships and/or the destruction of old ones, as well as in the creation new entrepreneurial opportunities. The outcome of 'first change' represents the opportunity to start a new business embedded in the first transitional object, while the

outcome of experimental relations are strategic opportunities which address management policies and configurations. This outcome represents how the ‘first change’ has been transformed into a non-fictional side of the company’s strategy which also addresses not-yet real possibilities and a *horizon*. The entire Comelit’s story shows that entrepreneurial firms are constantly open to experimenting new relations which generate opportunities. In other words, it underlines that entrepreneuring occurs as the way to manage a firm in view of new ‘first changes’. We therefore claim that the ‘first change’ is the key process of entrepreneuring. A further understanding of entrepreneuring arises by considering the transformation of the ‘first change’. Comelit’s story recounts that the events immediately following the ‘first change’ transformed Mr. Brasi’s *imaginary* to pursue innovation through time and space into the project of decentralizing and internationalizing company’s activities. These events, in fact, formed a meta-project which opened to the company the possibility to generate strategic opportunities for many years ahead. Thus, the entrepreneur’s *imaginary* was continually transformed as long as activities could be internationalized and markets conquered. The events ‘soon after the first change’ represent how the ‘first change’ *imaginary* was transformed into a meta strategy which could subsist throughout the firm’s life leaving open the possibility to create unforeseeable opportunities. New opportunities as ‘first changes’ then could successfully move firm’s strategy in action throughout new strategic relations with suppliers, customers, markets and competitors. Thus, the firm’s *imaginary* and its *horizon* could be defined through new contents while reaffirming firm’s continuity. The analysis of the events ‘soon after the first change’ provides a new perspective on the issue of defining strategy. It shows that strategy is neither the *a priori* clear design which addresses how to create and manage the business, nor simply a pre-reflective undefined view of it. By experimenting a dialogical interaction between our theoretical approach and the details of few entrepreneurial strategies we could instead define strategy as the entrepreneurial experience

following the 'first change' and the decision to start a business. Our analysis showed that the events immediately following the 'first change' represent themselves strategy in action, since they create the basic web of firm-environment relations. Besides, firms' stories therefore showed that strategy is not the origin of action, but is instead formed through the creation of opportunities which deal with immediate problems. A strategy design instead appears as the outcome of the way events have woven together opportunities into a unique texture. Consistency among opportunities, however, maintains strategy always incomplete and in the way of being other than what it is.

The analysis of the 'first change and the events following it has been the best opportunity to explore entrepreneuring. Our stories have shown that this experience is not the creative management of established subject-environment relationships, but rather implies the creation of strategic opportunities. Entrepreneuring therefore always occur as a 'first change' and as events following it. 'First change' then appears to be the key side of the of entrepreneuring activity.

Conclusions, contributions and implications

Most entrepreneurship research is still embedded in rationalism and cognitivism (Armitage, Berkes, & Doubleday, 2007; Baker & Pollock, 2007). However, recent clear-cut research has moved away from the means-ends schema pointing that innovation makes predictions highly unreliable, while predictions make innovation impossible (Mackenzie, 2005; Winder, 2007). This new research calls for consistency with the historical, emergent, ambiguous, and transformative nature of entrepreneuring (Ravetz, 2007; Wiggins & Ruefli, 2005). It further affirms that the emergence of novelty cannot be explained through causal models (e.g., Shane & Venkataraman, 2000) since innovation is actually organic and emergent, therefore resisting to planning while morphing into unpredictable forms (Christensen & Raynor, 2003; Schindehutte & Morris, 2009: 247). We suggested to overcome the means-ends schema by

rooting entrepreneurship in contemporary sociology (Joas, 1985, 1996, Shotter, 1993), thus providing a perspective on entrepreneuring consistent with the theory of creative action. For this purpose we drew on Mead and Joas' pragmatism as perspectives which overcome the dualisms of rationalism, cognitivism and subjectivism by assuming the primacy of interaction. According to pragmatism, we then considered the subject-environment interaction as the process of constituting the self, the body, and the object. However, we also accounted for Joas' warning that interactions flow from a first definition of the problem, which becomes the origin of interactions because problems cannot be given, but are defined according to the subject's holistic view of future interactions. The issue of defining the problem then became the primary focus of a further research about how this occur beyond Joas' suggestion that at the beginning of action there are pre-reflective undefined goals. Through the reference to few stories about a start-up of entrepreneurial companies we did this research by comparing our approach to pragmatism to the way the decision of a start up occurs in practice. As a result we could show that behind the definition of pre-reflective goals there are subject-environment experiences which create first the transitional opportunity to start a business as a 'first change', then the many micro opportunities which dealing with ongoing problems build a strategy design. We showed that this process represents itself a strategy in action which creates both a first encompassing view of firm's *horizon* and instructions about how to move the strategy beyond the present. To describe both the experience of the 'first change' and the following one of creating a transitional strategy in action we drew on Shotter's rhetorical-responsive approach to joint action. Thus we could embed pre-reflective goals in the subject's background and in his *imaginary* to explain how afterwards the 'first change' was transformed into the first strategizing activity. Thus, even within pragmatism, we could relate the immediacy of the event to an overarching dimension subsisting throughout events, but always changing. Events therefore were defined as processes that build the non-fictional side

of the outcome as well as its not-yet real one which address the need for further actions. Entrepreneurial firms' stories enabled us to distinguish two main sides of the defining problems, the 'first event' and the events 'soon after the first change'. Thus we could focus the research on what precedes the choice to start a business and on what follows immediately after. This distinction was crucial to observe the complexity of how the choice to start a business is generated, as well as to grasp how the strategizing process is enacted. The first event confirmed that behind pre-reflective goals there is a 'first change' experience. We could define it as the process of generating a transitional object. Besides, drawing on Shotter's rhetorical-responsive approach, we showed that the 'first change' shares the nature of the subject's *imaginary* which orients events towards a *horizon*. Thus we could define the 'first change' through the properties of the imaginary, as always incomplete and in the way of becoming other than what it is. We could also affirm that it is made of a non-fictional material side and as the concrete indication of what is not-yet real. This definition of the 'first event' was applied to each event, but as a transitional experience we analyzed how the present event transformed the previous one and therefore its non-fictional side and the not-yet real one. Through the analysis of this first event we also addressed the relation of subjectivity with the assumption that interaction and mediation are the primary mechanism that constitutes the subject, the object and the body. Stories showed that the 'first change' arises from experimental interactions. Despite so, we suggested that the primacy of subjectivity is maintained for a few fundamental reasons. We pointed out that in order to produce pre-reflective goals orienting the construction of the new business the 'first change' opportunity must meet the entrepreneurial will to make a business out of it. Besides, we pointed out that the interaction that generate the 'first change' are not yet interaction of the business. In other words, we addressed that pre-reflective goals are embedded in interactions which belong to the subject's personal experience, rather than to his business experience. The choice of

starting a business and the definition of pre-reflective goals then could be explained as embedded in the entrepreneur's personal experience, consistently with Joas' assumption that the origin of the problem is subjective. Given this primacy of subjectivity, we could explain the interactions of the 'first change' also through Mead and Joas' pragmatism as applying to any kind of interaction, while Shotter's rhetorical-responsive view enabled us to relate the 'first change' to the subject' background as well as to his *horizon*. Besides, Shotter's approach suggested to address this event as the way the personal entrepreneurial background and his *imaginary* turned into the *imaginary* of an entrepreneurial project. The focus on events also showed how after the decision to engage in the construction of a new business pre-reflective goals address the first strategizing process. Then it became clear that strategizing 'soon after the first change' was actually the process of creating in the present situations which while facing immediate problems also defined basic foundations for the future of the business. Thus we could underline that these event actually create opportunities for running the new business. In the end, both the 'first change' and the events 'soon after the first change' showed some key generalized characteristics of entrepreneuring. We could arrive at such generalization by comparing how creativity manifests itself in the definition of the problem and within established interactions. By reminding Mead's view that creativity is the way the subjects suspends interaction to assess it while searching for strategies to monitor established relations, we could underline that creativity becomes entrepreneuring only when the subject experiments new relations that provide new opportunities. We also could point out that entrepreneurial firms maintain throughout their life the key openness to experimenting new relations rather than hampering them through entrepreneurial clear strategies. This research has shown that by experimenting new perspective the entrepreneurship phenomenon can reveal hidden unseen aspects which highlight it whatever the approach. Our understanding of the centrality of the 'first change' is a clear example of this view. A further example is the

emergence instead of the irrelevance of the issue about whether or not who enacts the ‘first change’ is the entrepreneur.

We owe to pragmatism our drive to explore entrepreneuring by focusing on single events. We believe that this focus is extremely fertile, since it obliges researchers to abandon easy abstractions and generalizations and reveals a new key understanding through a theory-practice dialogical vision. Though it has accounted for events’ details, however, this research still needs explore other details. We think that this research shows above all a research methodology and that our issues wait for further answers. A lot more needs to be done to intertwine pragmatism with perspectives to provide new accounts of transcendence and events’ *horizon*, beyond Shotter’s practical hermeneutics. Research also needs to address the process of entrepreneurship beyond the events immediately following the ‘first change’ when the *imaginary* of the entrepreneur becomes that of the organization. Great opportunities to understand entrepreneurship can also arise by exploring the nature of the entrepreneurial firm. Research then ought to highlight what are the process that keep the firm open to new ‘first changes’ which create new business configurations while destroying old ones. Above all, the entrepreneurial research needs to address how stable should be a strategy design, or if it can be defined a pre-reflective one along with Joas’ indications, but also addressing the firm’s *horizon*.

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