A DISCURSIVE APPROACH TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND THE EMERGENCE OF ORGANIZATIONAL FIELDS

Raghu Garud*
Pennsylvania State University
814 861 069
rgarud@psu.edu

Theresa Lant
New York University
212 998 0226
tlant@stern.nyu.edu

Henri A. Schildt
Imperial College London
+358 50 3371236
h.schildt@imperial.ac.uk

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Abstract

The objective of this paper is to explain how emerging organizational fields influence entrepreneurial agency and, conversely, how such agency shapes emerging fields during upswing, downturn and stabilization periods. Adopting a discursive perspective, we explicate how shared symbols provide entrepreneurs resources to formulate and legitimate heterogeneous visions during upswing periods. During downturns, shared symbols lose their appeal, becoming liabilities for entrepreneurs who had used them in their narratives. Fields stabilize when narratives of valid and desirable practices converge, delegitimizing divergent practices.
REFERENCES


DoubleClick, 2007. [http://www.doubleclick.com/about/what_we_do.aspx](http://www.doubleclick.com/about/what_we_do.aspx)


FIGURE 1
A Stylized View of Discursive Dynamics in the Context of Emerging Fields

Field-level discourse

Discourse conditions the creation, interpretation and evaluation of narratives.

Narratives become part of discourse, contributing to shared beliefs, norms, and meanings.

Narratives related to the emerging field

Entrepreneurs

The Media

Potential Stakeholders
Table 1: Discursive Dynamics during Organizational Field Emergence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Upswing</th>
<th>Downturn</th>
<th>Stabilization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Field-level discourse</strong></td>
<td>Heterodox discourse populated by exciting new symbols and multiple claims that cannot be directly compared</td>
<td>Fragmented discourse populated by symbols that have lost legitimacy</td>
<td>Orthodox discourse populated by symbols that project measurable performance outcomes that can be directly compared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Field boundaries</strong></td>
<td>Amorphous boundaries based on a set of shared symbols</td>
<td>Shrinking boundaries</td>
<td>Stabilized and consensual boundaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Typical salient narratives</strong></td>
<td>Expectations of an exciting future</td>
<td>Bleak future with regrets about the past</td>
<td>Here and now accounts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Power/Authority</strong></td>
<td>Discourse empowers entrepreneurs as media amplifies promises of future performance</td>
<td>Discourse constrains entrepreneurs and empowers stakeholders as media amplifies accounts of failure</td>
<td>Discourse empowers organizations that conform as media reports demonstrable performance</td>
</tr>
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