

ESSAYS ON ARTS ENTREPRENEURSHIP:  
EXPLORING CREATIVE ENTREPRENEURIAL PROCESSES

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Doctor of Philosophy

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By  
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The undersigned, appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

**ESSAYS ON ARTS ENTREPRENEURSHIP:  
EXPLORING CREATIVE ENTREPRENEURIAL PROCESSES**

presented by Sara Rosa Soares Traquina Alves Elias,  
a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of Business Administration,  
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ARTS ENTREPRENEURSHIP:  
SPEAKING OUT ON THE AESTHETICS OF CO-CREATING NOVELTY  
AND ON CREATIVE IMAGINING

Paper I

Abstract

Despite both the fundamental role of entrepreneurship in the success of artistic careers and the similarities between creating art and novelty, the field of organizational entrepreneurship has, to date, paid little attention to the entrepreneurial processes involved in the creation of artistic work and aesthetic value. In an attempt to shift attention to overlooked areas and phenomena in our field (e.g., arts entrepreneurship, the aesthetics of entrepreneurship, novelty co-creation, creative imagining), this paper problematizes the dominant assumption in organizational entrepreneurship studies that individuals behave rationally. As a result, this paper challenges commonly taken-for-granted assumptions of both utility and economic profit maximization as drivers of the entrepreneurial process in favor of a view in which individuals become entrepreneurial in the pursuit of entrepreneurial dreams, creative freedom, artistic passion, and social change.

*Keywords:* arts entrepreneurship, aesthetics of entrepreneurship, co-creating novelty, creative imagining, entrepreneurial process.

## **Why Arts Entrepreneurship?**

As a performing artist and managing director of an international center for promoting the arts, I have experienced entrepreneurship to be fundamental to the survival of not only my artistic career, but also the nonprofit venture that I co-founded with my family in Portugal amidst a severe economic (and eventually political) crisis. Although many artists practice entrepreneurship worldwide—be it for reasons of survival or of following a passion—this side of entrepreneurship (i.e., arts entrepreneurship) has, sadly, not received as much scholarly attention as other areas (e.g., corporate entrepreneurship, technology entrepreneurship, strategic entrepreneurship). Underlying this oversight is, I believe, the dominant assumption in mainstream entrepreneurship studies that entrepreneurs behave rationally; that is, that their goal is to maximize both utility and economic profit. However, as I have learned from my dissertation’s research participants—and as I have experienced myself—entrepreneurs may be primarily motivated by the pursuit of creative freedom, following a passion, and making a difference in the world or in one’s life. In this way, individuals’ entrepreneurial efforts may be rooted in, predominantly, the creation of aesthetic rather than economic value. This is particularly true in arts entrepreneurship.

Arts entrepreneurship refers to the creation and pursuit of novel ideas by individuals who engage in artistic activities and who apply, share, and distribute creative work (Bridgstock, 2013; Scherdin & Zander, 2011a)—a process that ultimately drives the market process (Davidsson, 2004). Thus, an arts entrepreneur need not be an artist *per se*. For example, two of the research participants in my dissertation, Alberto Elias and Hyanneke Van Der Pennen, identified themselves as arts entrepreneurs even though they

do not actually create artwork; however, they actively engage in a variety of entrepreneurial efforts to promote, share, and distribute others' creative work in the musical and visual arts, respectively, and, as such, drive the market process.

Entrepreneurial efforts in the creative industry—which includes the visual, literary, musical, and performing arts—have recently been recognized for their role in economic development and growth (Bridgstock, 2013; Phillips, 2010). And some scholars have even described the field of arts entrepreneurship as a unique and prolific area for studying, for instance, creative processes, novelty creation, and processes of transformation (see Scherdin & Zander, 2011a). Surprisingly, however, the field of arts entrepreneurship remains largely understudied and, as a result, little is still known regarding the entrepreneurial processes involved in the creation of both artistic work and aesthetic value.

### **Problematizing Organizational Entrepreneurship's**

#### **Dominant Philosophical Assumptions**

The main reason for the lack of focus on arts entrepreneurship is that, in general, scholars have a tendency to overlook industries (such as the creative industry) that do not “fit neatly into the neoclassical economic model” (Phillips, 2010, p.245; also see Caves, 2000)—the dominant economic perspective in the field of organizational entrepreneurship. Arts entrepreneurs are embedded in a world of uncertainty (for instance, in terms of the demand for their creative and unique work), which requires them to look for alternative ways of survival (e.g., having a second—and sometimes third—job) so that they can, for example, afford the materials needed for creating art—their true passion and ultimate goal in life (see Bridgstock, 2013; Lindqvist, 2011). This depiction

of the arts entrepreneur is quite different from the neoclassical view of the entrepreneur as one who behaves rationally with the primary goal of maximizing both utility and economic profit (Phillips, 2010; Stinchfield, Nelson, & Wood, 2013). Adding to the complexity underlying the lives of arts entrepreneurs is the highly subjective value of each unique work of art and the lack of recognition for the artistic (and entrepreneurial) efforts involved in the *process* of creation (as opposed to a rational valuation of the artistic *outcome*). This is particularly problematic in the performing arts, where artists who are (hopefully) compensated for a one-hour concert are often criticized for how much they charge; but what non-artists may not realize is that it takes several weeks (up to several months, depending on the artist and the particular performance) to prepare a concert, which is also the result of a cumulative process of artistic skill from a lifetime of experience. Thus, the complexity involved in the process of artistic creation is difficult to quantify and analyze using neoclassicist economic models. And although a few scholars have endeavored to show that some entrepreneurs may not necessarily be driven by pure rationality and economics (e.g., Baker & Nelson, 2005; Wood & McKinley, 2010; Stinchfield et al., 2013), this remains a generally understudied perspective in our field.

In order to explore creative entrepreneurial processes in the field of arts entrepreneurship, scholars need to take an approach rooted in philosophical assumptions that are not commonly used in mainstream entrepreneurship studies. This means that scholars need to be reflexive—i.e., they need to question taken-for-granted assumptions as well as the ways in which they conduct research (Gill, 2011; Barge, 2004)—so that they can problematize and, as a result, broaden traditional views of entrepreneurship (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007). This is one of the benefits of pursuing research in arts

entrepreneurship, as doing so requires challenging the dominant assumption that entrepreneurs are primarily motivated by wealth creation and that their actions are taken in the “pursuit of profit and commercial gain” (Bridgstock, 2013, p.125). Instead, venturing into arts entrepreneurship pushes us to broaden our horizons to favor a view in which the pursuit of autonomy and of creative freedom—what Rindova, Barry, and Ketchen (2009) term “entrepreneuring as emancipation”—plays a greater role in entrepreneurs’ creative actions.

For example, all the research participants in my dissertation, regardless of whether they were artists or not, expressed that even though they “like to make money,” what drove their arts-based entrepreneurial activities was the “freedom to create,” their wish to “follow [their] passion and staying true to [themselves],” and the need to “touch people and make a difference in their lives.” One of my research participants candidly shared that if he had to work a corporate job and lost his ability to create art, he would likely end his life. Although the others did not share such profound feelings, they were all very conscious of the little economic prospect inherent to pursuing a career in arts entrepreneurship. Yet, they were all okay with—if not proud of—it. In fact, one even decided to forego a well-paying engineering career to do what she loves.

Overall, venturing into arts entrepreneurship is advantageous in that it allows for shedding light on phenomena that are critical not only for processes of artistic creation but also for the entrepreneurial process *writ large*. Such phenomena, which I explore in great depth in this dissertation’s two empirical papers, include aesthetic experience, novelty co-creation, relationality, creative imagining, and temporality. In the next sections, I summarize these phenomena while continuing to problematize our field’s

dominant philosophical assumptions and focusing attention on the aesthetics of co-creating novelty and on creative imagining.

### **Speaking Out on the Aesthetics of Co-Creating Novelty**

Reflexively questioning economic rationality as the key driver of the entrepreneurial process—the dominant and taken-for-granted assumption in entrepreneurship research—allows for shifting attention to yet another side of entrepreneurship that is related to arts entrepreneurship and, as such, often overlooked: The aesthetics of entrepreneurship. An aesthetic approach to entrepreneurship assumes knowledge to be produced from sensory experience and from the interplay of body with mind (see Taylor & Hansen, 2005). At the core of aesthetics is the notion of connection, of interaction and relationality, in which phenomena (human and non-human) are interrelated, rather than separate and independent from one another (Taylor & Hansen, 2005). As such, aesthetic experience, with its ineffable and often tacit or unconscious elements, unfolds in the space *between* phenomena, rather than solely *within* rational individuals (Gagliardi, 2006; also see Taylor & Hansen, 2005). Thus, to venture into the aesthetics of entrepreneurship, one needs to adopt a relational and material ontology that acknowledges novelty to emerge from the interactions between embodied individuals and non-human elements (see Garud & Giuliani, 2013).

Ontologically, a relational materialist approach requires us to view novelty as an intersubjective process that emerges from the interactions between individuals who are embedded within a particular context, who continually interact with other human and non-human elements, and who interpret these interactions “against a continuously evolving cultural background” (Steyaert, 2007, p.460; also see Bradbury & Lichtenstein,

2000; Garud & Giuliani, 2013). Over a decade ago, Steyaert and Katz (2004) encouraged organizational entrepreneurship scholars “to approach entrepreneurship as a societal phenomenon rather than a purely economic reality” (p.181) and to shift their “focal point from single entrepreneurs to the everyday processes where multiple actors and stakeholders are made visible as related to entrepreneurship” (p.182). Since then, our field has continued to progress away from methodological individualism (i.e., viewing the entrepreneur as a lone and alert visionary) toward an approach that views entrepreneurship as a relational (i.e., social) process (Steyaert, 2007; Garud & Giuliani, 2013). Indeed, just recently, Suddaby and Young (2015) encouraged scholars to consider artistry as emerging from a “collective effort,” rather than from “individual inspiration” (p.3). Yet, stimulating research still remains to be done in organizational entrepreneurship. Broadly, one such research opportunity relates to novelty co-creation. Specifically, a relational materialist approach broadens our horizons to consider the role that customers (existing or imagined) play in the entrepreneurial process. Customers are essential to the entrepreneurial process not only because entrepreneurs are dependent on customers’ willingness to purchase a particular product or service, but also because customers continually enter entrepreneurs’ minds, both consciously and unconsciously, throughout the process of novelty generation and, as such, influence the development of entrepreneurial ideas. Yet, this relational process of novelty co-creation between entrepreneurs and customers is rarely explored in the entrepreneurship literature.

Epistemologically, scholars venturing into the aesthetics of entrepreneurship from a relational materialist perspective need to pursue qualitative methodologies, as these will allow them to understand, mindfully and holistically, the experience of entrepreneurs (see

Barry & Meisiek, 2010; Piras, 2007; Strati, 2000). Such methodologies are not only useful in generating fresh insight into a wide array of entrepreneurial processes, but also currently needed in entrepreneurship research (Suddaby, Bruton, & Si, 2015). Thus, in an attempt to explore how entrepreneurs and customers collaborate in the creation of unique ideas—and thus, to address a current oversight in the extant entrepreneurship literature—for this dissertation’s Paper II, titled *Co-creating novelty: An aesthetic approach to the entrepreneurial process*, I conducted a multi-sited micro-ethnography of three ventures within the creative industry. This 11-month-long study comprised a total of four entrepreneurs in the visual and musical arts, as well as numerous customers. Generally, the purpose of this paper is to provide insight into the aesthetic dimension of entrepreneurial processes of creation by exploring the relational and embodied processes involved in the co-creation of novelty between entrepreneurs and customers. Specifically, the focus is on understanding how entrepreneurs create unique products and services while considering their experiences with both their surrounding environment and with existing and imagined customers. The result is an in-depth understanding of three major dimensions—*embodied imagination, contemplation, and consensus*—within the aesthetics of novelty co-creation between entrepreneur and customer. As such, this paper contributes to the entrepreneurship literature by shedding light on the crucial role of the customer in processes of entrepreneurial creation. Overall, I encourage future scholars to continue venturing into the aesthetics of entrepreneurship, exploring relational approaches, and studying the processes by which entrepreneurs relate to and collaborate with customers in processes of novelty creation.

## **Speaking Out on Creative Imagining**

A lack of reflexivity in organizational entrepreneurship research has also resulted in scholars largely overlooking creative entrepreneurial imagination and the processes by which entrepreneurs imagine and generate novel ideas. Imagination is an essential human process—even more so than rationalism (Castoriadis, 1987)—that allows individuals and organizations to change their current state of affairs (Diamond, 2014) and, as a result, to generate novelty and make a difference in the world (Shackle, 1979). Surprisingly, however, entrepreneurship scholars still lack an in-depth understanding of the particular processes—embodied and relational, conscious and unconscious—by which individuals (and organizations) imagine and generate novelty. At the root of this oversight is mainstream entrepreneurship studies' overreliance on objectivist and mechanistic approaches, along with their variance-based methods (Chiles, Elias, & Li, forthcoming). Such approaches are ill suited for studying entrepreneurial imagining because this phenomenon is essentially subjective, processual, and neither directly observable nor easily measurable (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Scherdin, 2011). Therefore, scholars should abandon mechanistic perspectives and, instead, consider contextualist approaches that allow for an exploration of imagination as a relational process that unfolds in response to context and that assumes change to be the only constant; only this way will our field be able to fully understand the generation of novelty and difference (see Chiles et al., forthcoming; Horth, 2013; Hjorth, Holt, & Steyaert, 2015).

Given the fluid and dynamic nature of creative imagining (Diamond, 2014), an in-depth study of this process requires that scholars carefully reflect on assumptions of temporality. Specifically, it requires a shift from a mechanistic worldview rooted in

substantive metaphysics toward a contextualist perspective grounded in process metaphysics (Chiles et al., forthcoming; Langley, Smallman, Tsoukas, & Van de Ven, 2013). This perspective is currently needed in our field because it can help entrepreneurship scholars gain an in-depth understanding of sequences “of *events* over time by telling a story about how and why” (p.288) entrepreneurs’ subjective imaginations unfold into the partly *ex nihilo* creation of novel ideas and products (Chiles, 2003, italics in original; also see Gartner, 2007). In addition, this perspective allows us to consider a forward-looking perspective along with a suffusion of past, present, and future. As shown on this dissertation’s Paper II and Paper III, as entrepreneurs created novelty, imaginative reflection on past actions often unfolded concurrently with imaginative reflection on present and future actions. In other words, as entrepreneurs imagined alternative futures, the past, present, and future intertwined in a continuous flow of reflective, imaginative, and intuitive thought. In this sense, novelty emerged in flux, in the indivisible continuity of transition and duration (Bergson, 1946; also see Hjorth, 2013; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). This illustrates that the process of imagination unfolds in a non-deterministic manner, in which the past and the future are not assumed to be calculable functions of the present, and in which time is viewed as a continuous, non-repetitive, and non-quantifiable flow (Bergson, 1911). This approach is appropriate to studying creative entrepreneurial imagination because the purpose of imagination is “to transcend the present,” both “temporally and spatially” (McGinn, 2004, p.153). Also, taking a non-deterministic approach is important because it allows for viewing individuals as fundamentally free to act in surprising and unpredictable ways—a freedom that is essential to the creative process (McGinn, 2004; Shackle, 1979). Thus, scholars

wishing to depict the process of creative imagination need to carefully consider its dynamic, complex, and nonlinear nature.

In order to provide insight into the process of creative imagining, in this dissertation's Paper III, titled *Creative imagining: Developing and grounding a process model for entrepreneurship*, I conducted a longitudinal case study of a nonprofit venture operating within the music industry. I decided to focus on this industry because, in addition to being an overlooked yet fruitful area in our field, arts entrepreneurship allows for spotlighting entrepreneurial dreams (Rindova et al., 2009) and creative imagination (Bonnafous-Boucher, Cuir, & Partouche, 2011) as critical to the entrepreneurial process. The goal of this 25-month-long study was to gain an in-depth understanding of the specific processes—self-reflective and embodied, conscious and unconscious—through which entrepreneurs generate novelty by engaging their creative imaginations. To that end, I both developed and grounded a process model of how entrepreneurial ideas materialize from entrepreneurs' forward-looking imaginations. In an attempt to capture the fluid, nonlinear, dynamic, and complex nature of entrepreneurial imagination, I use the children's game of hopscotch as a metaphor<sup>1</sup> to illustrate how this process unfolds. The result is a hopscotch process model of entrepreneurial creative imagination yielding five elements—*experiencing, early creating, reaching an impasse and gestating, (re)creating and evaluating imagined futures, and choosing and enterprising*. In addition to illuminating the processes by which entrepreneurs imagine and generate novelty, this paper contributes to the field of organizational entrepreneurship by providing scholars

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<sup>1</sup> The hopscotch metaphor arose as inspiration while working on a process model for another paper (see Peticca-Harris, deGama, & Elias, 2016), developed at the same time I collected and analyzed data for my dissertation.

with a basis for further exploring the understudied topic of entrepreneurial creative imagination. Overall, I encourage scholars to continue studying the processes by which creative imagining unfolds, reflecting on temporality and imagining other non-deterministic ways of depicting fluid, nonlinear, dynamic, and complex processes.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

Although arts entrepreneurship has been largely overlooked by organizational entrepreneurship scholars, this area holds some exciting and promising avenues for future research. However, to explore arts entrepreneurship, scholars need to reflexively consider the philosophical assumptions guiding their research efforts. A problematization of economic rationality as the dominant assumption in entrepreneurship research will allow scholars to move away from the mainstream and, as a result, to broaden their horizons. Conceptually, they will be able to shed brighter light into such processes as the creation of aesthetic value, novelty co-creation, and creative imagining, which to date have received very little attention despite their fundamental role in the entrepreneurial process. Methodologically, they will consider approaches not commonly used in the entrepreneurship field, thus moving away from objectivist and mechanistic assumptions to embrace (inter)subjectivist and contextualist approaches (see Chiles et al., forthcoming). Specifically, they will become more involved and active in the research process (rather than detached and passive), be it by engaging in enactive research (Johannesson, 2011), spect-acting (Gill, 2011), or inter-viewing (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). As a result, researchers will find themselves fully immersed in the field—and thus with the phenomena under study—either experiencing a variety of (highly subjective) processes for themselves or interactively (and, thus, intersubjectively) attaining a richer

and more holistic understanding of a variety of entrepreneurial processes. This was my goal with my dissertation's Paper II and Paper III, in which I used such methodological techniques to explore, in great depth, both the relational and embodied processes involved in the co-creation of novelty and the processes by which creative imagination unfolds, respectively.

In closing, despite their role in economic development and growth, entrepreneurial efforts in the creative industry—which includes the visual, literary, musical, and performing arts—remain largely understudied in the field of organizational entrepreneurship. In an attempt to call scholarly attention to arts entrepreneurship, this essay problematizes our field's dominant and taken-for-granted assumptions, proposing that scholars reflexively consider the philosophical assumptions guiding their research efforts. In the process, it spotlights a number of overlooked areas and phenomena in our field—the aesthetics of entrepreneurship, novelty co-creation, relationality, creative imagining, and temporality. Ultimately, exploring arts entrepreneurship, as well as the aesthetic dimension of entrepreneurship, will allow scholars to acknowledge the pursuit of entrepreneurial dreams, imagined futures, and creative freedom as primary drivers of the entrepreneurial process, rather than the simple pursuit of economic profit. My hope is that this essay encourages entrepreneurship scholars to engage in reflexivity and, in the process, to uncover new avenues for future research so that we can continue exploring the processes by which entrepreneurs generate novelty, create aesthetic value, and make a difference in the world.

CO-CREATING NOVELTY:  
AN AESTHETIC APPROACH TO THE ENTREPRENEURIAL PROCESS

Paper II

Abstract

Despite the fundamental role of customers in processes of entrepreneurial creation, the field of organizational entrepreneurship has, to date, paid little attention to how novelty emerges from the interactions and collaborations between entrepreneur and customer. To begin addressing this oversight, I venture into a side of entrepreneurship that is often overlooked in research—the aesthetics of entrepreneurship—to explore the relational and embodied processes involved in the co-creation of novelty. Focusing attention on the field of arts entrepreneurship, I conducted an 11-month-long multi-sited micro-ethnographic study of three ventures within the creative industry, comprising a total of four entrepreneurs in the visual and musical arts, as well as numerous customers. This paper contributes to the field of organizational entrepreneurship by shedding light on the entrepreneurial process of novelty co-creation while calling scholars' attention to a largely overlooked perspective in entrepreneurship—one that challenges commonly taken-for-granted assumptions of both utility and economic profit maximization as drivers of the entrepreneurial process in favor of a view in which individuals become entrepreneurial in the pursuit of aesthetic value, imagined futures, and creative freedom.

*Keywords:* aesthetics of entrepreneurship, arts entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial process, novelty co-creation, relational and embodied processes

## **Introduction**

Novelty creation is an important component of the entrepreneurial process; and so is the customer. Although organizational entrepreneurship scholars have endeavored to explore how novelty emerges from entrepreneurs' actions (e.g., Chiles, Elias, Zarankin, & Vultee, 2013; Cornelissen, Clarke, & Cienki, 2012), their focus is often on the entrepreneur as the source of entrepreneurship. As a result, the customer, as well as its role in the development of entrepreneurial ideas, often goes unspoken for in the entrepreneurship literature. Problematizing methodological individualism in entrepreneurship studies, some scholars have made the call for a shift to a relational materialist ontology—an approach that opens the doors to exploring how novelty emerges from the “interactions between humans and artifacts” (Garud & Giuliani, 2013, p.157; Steyaert, 2007). In an attempt to answer this call, this paper explores the co-creation of unique products by focusing on the interactions and collaborations between entrepreneurs and customers. At the root of this paper is, thus, the notion that customers play a fundamental role in the entrepreneurial process because entrepreneurs are dependent on not only customers' willingness to purchase a specific product or service, but also customers' impact on the development of new products and services.

In order to explore the co-creation of novelty between entrepreneur and customer, this paper ventures into a side of entrepreneurship that is often overlooked—the aesthetics of entrepreneurship. Because this approach emphasizes both relationality and materiality in entrepreneurial creation, the focus of this paper is on both the relational and embodied processes involved in the co-creation of novelty. The notion of bodily experience as having an important role in the entrepreneurial creative process has already

received some attention: Sørensen (2006), for example, has emphasized the interplay of experience, body, and affect as essential to the entrepreneurial creative process. But despite Steyaert's (2007) call for more studies in this area, few empirical studies have addressed embodiment in entrepreneurship (for exceptions see Clarke, 2011; Cornelissen et al., 2012; Kisfalvi & Maguire, 2011), particularly when it comes to how entrepreneurs create unique products and services while considering their experiences with both their surrounding environment and with existing and imagined customers. My hope with this paper is, thus, to begin exploring such processes in greater depth and, in the process, shed light on entrepreneurial processes that, despite their key role in entrepreneurship, have received very little empirical attention.

When exploring the aesthetics of entrepreneurship, one is led to question commonly taken-for-granted assumptions in the extant entrepreneurship literature relating to economic rationality. That is, rather than assuming the maximization of both utility and economic profit as the key driver of the entrepreneurial process, an aesthetic approach to entrepreneurship considers individuals to become entrepreneurial in the pursuit of aesthetic experience, imagined futures, and creative freedom. An aesthetic approach to entrepreneurship allows us, thus, to place the creation of aesthetic value (rather than economic value) at center stage, and, consequently, to further shift our attention to an area in entrepreneurship that is currently understudied—that of arts entrepreneurship. Arts entrepreneurship entails the creation and pursuit of novel ideas by those who engage in artistic activities and who apply, share, and distribute creative work (Bridgstock, 2013; Scherdin & Zander, 2011a). As a research field, arts entrepreneurship is particularly well suited for exploring entrepreneurial processes, such as the co-creation

of novelty by both entrepreneurs and customers (Scherdin & Zander, 2011b); yet, to date, not many scholars have ventured into this area.

As such, I explore the field of arts entrepreneurship while taking an aesthetic approach to study the relational and embodied processes involved in the co-creation of novelty. To do so, I conduct an 11-month-long multi-sited micro-ethnographic study of three ventures within the creative industry, comprising a total of four entrepreneurs in the visual and musical arts, as well as numerous customers. Philosophically, my position is ontologically relativist and epistemologically interpretivist. This constructivist perspective is consistent with that of radical process philosophers taking a relational materialist approach to entrepreneurial becoming in which “both human and non-human elements” (p.471) are combined in a continual process of creation (Steyaert, 2007, also see Hjorth, 2013). Although a relational approach to entrepreneurship is not new, I differ from research in this area (e.g., Garud, Kumaraswamy, & Karnøe, 2010; Garud & Giuliani, 2013) in that these scholars (1) neglect processes of co-creation emerging from both entrepreneur and customer (in fact, they ignore the customer altogether), (2) fail to address, despite their narrative approach, how entrepreneurs’ internal conversations—i.e., the self-dialogues that take “place through imagination” and that unfold as conversations “between different selves and voices” (Burkitt, 2012, p.469)—aid in the creation of novelty, and (3) overlook processes of embodiment, which are at the root of the aesthetic and relational processes by which entrepreneurs engage in novelty creation. Thus, my approach is rooted in an understanding that both entrepreneurs and customers (inter)act in the creation of novelty and, in the process, assign meaning to their co-creations by means

of aesthetic—and thus embodied—responses to one another (as well as to the product or service emerging from their (inter)actions).

In sum, with this paper, I endeavor to pave the way for future scholars to further explore such understudied topics as the aesthetics of entrepreneurship, arts entrepreneurship, and the co-creation of novelty. I begin with setting the stage by providing an overview of these topics in the existing literature. Then, I state the research questions guiding this study, as well as the research approach used to answer such questions. This study's results suggest that embodied imagination, contemplation, and consensus are at the root of the interactions by which entrepreneurs and customers co-create novelty. To conclude, I articulate implications for entrepreneurship and reflect on limitations and directions for future research. This paper is unique in that it sheds light into the role of customers, existing or imagined, in processes of novelty creation while also providing insight into both the aesthetics of entrepreneurship and arts entrepreneurship.

### **The Aesthetics of Entrepreneurship**

Despite a few exceptions, much of the organizational entrepreneurship literature tends to use “the logic of economic rationality” (Calás, Smircich, & Bourne, 2009, p.553) to assume that entrepreneurs are individuals who behave rationally with the primary goal of maximizing both utility and economic profit (see Phillips, 2011; Stinchfield, Nelson, & Wood, 2013). This perspective is problematic for two reasons. First, it assumes that entrepreneurs are purely motivated by the creation of economic value rather than by, for instance, the pursuit of autonomy and of creative freedom (Rindova, Barry, & Ketchen, 2009). Second, it is rooted in a tendency “to contain economic outcomes within discrete

nested levels” (p.564), thus leading researchers to overlook both the interdependency (and inherent messiness) between levels of analysis and the contextual and social dynamics in which the entrepreneurial process unfolds (Calás et al., 2009). For these reasons, perspectives that assume economic rationality and that, consequently, are rooted in logico-rational (objective) assumptions (see Gagliardi, 2006), tend to downplay concepts such as the creation of aesthetic value, and approaches entailing the holistic analysis of multilevel and relational processes. Ultimately, this results in a narrow view of both the entrepreneur and the entrepreneurial process. In an attempt to broaden understanding, this paper ventures into a side of entrepreneurship that is often overlooked—the aesthetics of entrepreneurship (see Hjorth & Steyaert, 2009). This view, which is grounded in aesthetic-intuitive (subjective) assumptions (see Gagliardi, 2006), spotlights both aesthetic experience and relationality in processes of entrepreneurial creation.

In very broad terms, aesthetics relates to “knowledge that is created from our sensory experiences” (Taylor & Hansen, 2005, p.1212). This type of knowledge is very different from the rational, detached, and disembodied knowledge that results from separating body and mind and, consequently, from focusing exclusively on one’s cognition—a view that is typical of Cartesian rationalism (Barrett, 2000; Taylor & Hansen, 2005). Rather, knowledge that is produced through aesthetic experience is non-rational, sensible, and embodied, and, as such, is actively produced (as opposed to passively received) by sensing individuals whose minds are not separated from their bodies (Barrett, 2000; Taylor & Hansen, 2005). This type of knowing, which Vico termed “poetic wisdom,” is facilitated by one’s feeling, thinking, and imagining and entails the continuous interaction between one’s inner and outer world, between Self and

Other (Barrett, 2000; Strati, 2007). Thus, at the core of aesthetics is the notion of connection, of interaction and relationality, in which phenomena (human and non-human) are interrelated, rather than separate and independent from one another (Taylor & Hansen, 2005). As such, aesthetic experience, with its ineffable and often tacit or unconscious elements, unfolds in the space *between* phenomena, rather than solely *within* human beings (Gagliardi, 2006; also see Taylor & Hansen, 2005). Taking an aesthetic approach to entrepreneurship is particularly important for exploring processes of entrepreneurial co-creation, as novelty in such processes (if not in most processes of entrepreneurial creation) emerges from the interactions between individuals and between individuals and a variety of elements in both their internal and external environments. In other words, an aesthetic approach to entrepreneurship recognizes that entrepreneurs' actions and interactions emerge from their conscious and unconscious experiencing of the world, with its human and non-human elements, and from their feeling "of what it is to be part of more than [them]selves" (Taylor & Hansen, 2005, p.1215).

The aesthetics of entrepreneurship is, thus, a perspective that emphasizes both materiality and relationality in processes of entrepreneurial creation. In this view, the entrepreneurial process unfolds both in the material world, which includes the entrepreneur's own body, and in the entrepreneur's mind as he or she relates, (inter)acts, and responds to various elements in the surrounding environment. As such, this view acknowledges that entrepreneurs are individuals who use their bodies to sense, feel, imagine, and interact with other elements (human and non-human, material and non-material) in the environment in which they are embedded to, ultimately, create novelty. This holistic approach is in stark contrast with much of the organizational

entrepreneurship literature, which tends to treat entrepreneurs as disembodied minds, with little to no regard for the impact of the body and related (inter)actions in processes of entrepreneurial creation (for exceptions see, for instance, Cornelissen et al., 2012; Hjorth, 2013; Kisfalvi & Maguire, 2011; Sørensen, 2006). To counter this tendency, this paper endeavors to provide insight into the relational and embodied processes involved in the co-creation of novelty by spotlighting arts entrepreneurship as a fruitful venue for studying such processes.

### **Arts Entrepreneurship and the Co-Creation of Novelty**

A desire to seek an aesthetic understanding of entrepreneurial co-creation shifts our attention to an area within entrepreneurship where the creation of novelty and of aesthetic value take center stage—that of arts entrepreneurship. Arts entrepreneurship refers to the creation and pursuit of novel ideas by individuals who engage in artistic activities and who apply, share, and distribute creative work (Bridgstock, 2013; Scherdin & Zander, 2011a)—a process that ultimately drives the market process (Davidsson, 2004). At the core of arts entrepreneurship is the creation of novelty by individuals who transform subjective ideas “into tangible objects of art and artistic expressions” (Scherdin & Zander, 2011a, p.4) and who need to find convincing ways to convey the (primarily aesthetic) value of their art to potential (and often uncertain) customers. Oftentimes, arts entrepreneurs find this to be a challenging process because it requires them to convey to customers something other than the “practical usefulness or profit potential” (p.4) of artistic work (Scherdin & Zander, 2011a). But this is not to say that the customer only enters the picture after a work of art has been completed and is ready to be sold. At times, both artist and customer collaborate in the creation of art, as with some commissioned

artwork; at other times, the customer simply exists in artists' imaginations as they envision ways to connect with future customers. Either way, these are processes that entail the co-creation of novelty between the artist and existing or imagined customers.

Regardless of whether the customer actually exists or is only imagined, the creation of art—or, in broader terms, the creation of novelty—is undoubtedly affected by the entrepreneur's interpretation and imagination of what will move a customer to accept and purchase an artwork. Thus, the customer plays a fundamental role in entrepreneurs' creative processes as they generate novelty. This is true not only for arts entrepreneurship in particular, but also for organizational entrepreneurship in general. Surprisingly, however, entrepreneurship scholars have largely ignored the role of the customer in the entrepreneurial process, except for some attempts to address this oversight.

First, scholars researching user entrepreneurship have described the customer as a "source of entrepreneurial activity" and, as a result, have focused on how users who experience a need, end up creating and even commercializing a solution to that need, ultimately becoming "accidental entrepreneurs" (Shah & Tripsas, 2007, pp.123-124). Second, from an Austrian economics perspective, Mises (1949/1966) has described the customer as the supreme force in the market process by proposing the term "consumer sovereignty," which he uses to stress that "while the entrepreneur is the driving force in the market process, the customer is the final arbiter" (Chiles & Choi, 2000, p.195). Third, entrepreneurship scholars studying empathic processes have stressed the importance of understanding how envisioning future customers' needs affects entrepreneurs' creative imaginations and, as a result, the creation of new markets and businesses (Chiles, Tuggle, McMullen, Bierman, & Greening, 2010a). Thus, the customer has received some

attention, even if little, by organizational entrepreneurship scholars. However, less attention has been paid to the processes by which entrepreneurs relate to, and interact with, existing and imagined customers as they both engage in the creation of novelty.

To begin addressing this oversight, this paper explores arts entrepreneurship as potentially generative for studying relationality and embodiment as contextualized processes. Although arts entrepreneurship has not received much attention from entrepreneurship scholars (Lindqvist, 2011), it has been recognized as a promising camp for exploring processes of novelty creation, particularly when it comes to the co-creation of novelty by both entrepreneurs and customers (Scherdin & Zander, 2011b). Arts entrepreneurship also provides a venue in which to gather a contextualized understanding of entrepreneurial creative processes. For instance, in addition to having to relate to both existing and imagined customers, arts entrepreneurs need to be responsive to the uncertain contexts in which they are embedded (regarding, for instance, the demand for their unique work, or the availability of needed resources). Thus, because novelty creation is a contextualized process that unfolds in unpredictable ways (Bonnafous-Boucher, Cuir, & Partouche, 2011), arts entrepreneurs often need to rely on their past experience, personal beliefs, and even “gut feelings” (rather than on rational economic analyses) to relate to potential customers while being responsive to uncertain environments (Lindqvist, 2011). As such, arts entrepreneurship is a promising area for shedding light on the relational and embodied processes by which entrepreneurs experience and interact with both their surrounding environment and existing or imagined customers. In the next sections, I first state the research questions guiding this study and, then, I describe the research approach used to answer such questions.

## **Research Questions**

This study's central research question is: How do entrepreneurs and their customers interact with one another and with material elements over time to create unique products? Ultimately, I seek an in-depth understanding of the specific aesthetic processes, relational and embodied, that allow entrepreneurs to create novelty, by addressing two sub-questions: (1) How does novelty emerge from entrepreneurs' interactions with both their *selves* (by engaging in internal conversations) and *others* (by conversing with customers)? and (2) How does novelty emerge from entrepreneurs' aesthetic experience of their surrounding environment, of both existing and imagined customers, and of interactions with human and non-human phenomena?

## **Research Approach**

In an attempt to further understand the aesthetic dimension of entrepreneurial processes of creation, this paper explores the relational and embodied processes involved in the co-creation of novelty in the field of arts entrepreneurship. To that end, I conducted an 11-month-long multi-sited micro-ethnographic study of three ventures within the creative industry, comprising a total of four entrepreneurs in the visual and musical arts, as well as numerous customers. First, a multi-sited approach is appropriate because it allows for gaining an in-depth understanding of “select phenomena in different organizational sites” (Prasad, Prasad, & Mir, 2010, p.707). Unlike conventional ethnography, which constrains investigation of phenomena to a single location, multi-sited ethnography allows for exploring “the endless movement and flows of ideas, objects, and people” (p.138) across a range of contexts (Prasad & Prasad, 2009), as well as for understanding how particular phenomena unfold and diffuse across particular time

and space contexts (Marcus, 1999). The aim of multi-sited studies is, thus, to reach an in-depth understanding of broader processes by investigating how specific phenomena unfold in diverse organizational settings (Prasad et al., 2010).

Second, a micro-ethnographic approach is fitting because my goal is to study processes of embodiment and relationality and, as such, to go beyond a focus on verbal communication to include such phenomena as nonverbal behaviors (e.g., gestures, posture, facial expressions) that unfold in response to interactions with particular material and social surroundings (LeBaron, 2005). Micro-ethnographic studies are virtually non-existent in entrepreneurship (for an exception see Cornelissen et al., 2012), despite their usefulness in understanding broader processes (such as entrepreneurial creation) while investigating more minute processes (such as entrepreneurs' aesthetic experience and respective embodied and relational elements) (see LeBaron, 2005). When put together, a multi-sited and micro-ethnographic approach allowed me to reach an in-depth understanding of the broad process of entrepreneurial creation while focusing on the dynamic nature of the particular interactions between entrepreneur and customer, in different organizational settings, as they collaborated in the creation of novelty.

In general, a qualitative methodology is not only useful for addressing such processes, but a necessary approach when researching the aesthetic dimension of organizations (Piras, 2007; also see Strati, 2000). The reason for this is that “the aesthetic experience is holistic and the sum of the parts does not equal the whole” (p.1221); thus, approaches that reduce phenomena to distinct levels of analysis are simply not appropriate to study aesthetics (Taylor & Hansen, 2005). Instead, researchers need to go beyond a focus on “cognition and analytical-rational logic” (p.242) to engage all their

senses in the pursuit of empathically (and holistically) understanding the experience of research participants (Strati, 2009). To do so, they need to immerse themselves in the sensory context of informants while engaging their imaginations to empathically experience what it is like to be in the shoes of the other—something that can only be achieved through ethnographic techniques such as in-depth interviews and participant observation (Gagliardi, 2006; Piras, 2007; Strati, 1999).

In particular, a qualitative methodology is appropriate for this study because I am seeking an in-depth (and holistic) understanding of the aesthetic dimension of a process—that of co-creating novelty through embodiment and relationality—and of how it unfolds over time by focusing on three ventures in the field of arts entrepreneurship. To do so, I immersed myself in ethnographic fieldwork for 11 months, during which time I relied on my imagination, intuition, and sensory experience to address the research questions guiding this study while preserving the different points of view unfolding in the field (see Strati, 1999). Specifically, while conducting this study, I endeavored to answer Locke, Golden-Biddle and Feldman's (2008) call for decoupling “the process of theorizing from validation” (p.916) and for, rather than avoiding what some might view as mistakes, actually embracing such moments as potentially generative. As such, I took an abductive approach,<sup>2</sup> rooted in an understanding of doubt, surprise, and reflexivity<sup>3</sup> as

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<sup>2</sup> Abduction, a concept introduced by Charles Peirce, is a type of reasoning that is generally concerned with the generation of ideas (Locke et al., 2008). It is different from other types of reasoning in that “deduction proves that something *must* be; induction shows that something *actually is* operative; abduction merely suggests that something *may be*” (Peirce 1931-1958 (CP) 5:171; emphasis in original). Also, while induction starts with empirical data and deduction starts with theory, abduction begins with empirical data while accepting the existence of theoretical preconceptions (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Reflexivity refers to the process through which scholars become aware of, and eventually challenge, the taken-for-granted assumptions and conceptualizations guiding their research efforts (see Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Cunliffe, 2003).

critical to the research process. This approach, which is fitting for ethnographic research (Klag & Langley, 2013), allowed me to go into the field, not with the unrealistic belief that I could be free of theoretical constraints, but, rather, with both an awareness of my own assumptions and the need to remain open to alternative views that might emerge from breakthroughs in the field (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007). In the process, I allowed my senses, affect, and imagination to guide my research endeavors in the continual cycling, or spiraling, between the precomposed and the improvised, between the part and whole, while working on the edge of certainty and surprise (Cerwonka & Malkki, 2007) to achieve the conceptual leaps that are at the root of the results of this study (Klag & Langley, 2013).

### **Research Setting and Data Collection**

In this study, I seek to understand the broad process of entrepreneurial co-creation while focusing on the particular interactions between entrepreneur and customer, in different organizational settings, as they collaborate in the creation of novelty. In an attempt to not dilute the richness of the empirical material, I limited this study to three ventures in the field of arts entrepreneurship (see Creswell, 2007). My overall goal was to trace the common patterns and themes emerging across the different organizational settings (Prasad et al., 2010) to, ultimately, paint a broad picture of the aesthetic dimension of entrepreneurship. Specifically, the focal arts entrepreneurs in this study are: (1) Sasha Radicic, a master luthier, (2) Adam B. Cook, a painter/sculptor, and (3) Rudy Zapf, a mixed-media artist. All three artists are located in St. Louis, MO; and while Sasha Radicic and Rudy Zapf are the only entrepreneur within their companies, Adam B. Cook, as a venture, actually comprises a team of two—the artist and his wife, Hyanneke Van

Der Pennen. Thus, although this study focuses on three ventures, it actually entails a total of four arts entrepreneurs. Because in all three organizational settings the artists create both customized and noncustomized works of art, they routinely engage in the creation of novelty by attending to both their lived experiences with past and present clients and their expectations of future clients—which refers to the central question underlying this research project. Moreover, the creation of works of art resulting from the efforts of these arts entrepreneurs unfolds in a particular organizational environment that affects and is affected by the relational and embodied processes through which these individuals create novelty—which relates to the two sub-questions guiding this study.

The primary methods of data collection are ethnographic fieldwork, in-depth interviews, and secondary sources. As part of my ethnographic fieldwork, I engaged, on a weekly basis, in both participant observation and spect-acting.<sup>4</sup> As a result, I (actively) participated in fieldwork action, for instance, by helping with setting up the space used for art creation, providing personal aesthetic and artistic opinions, and engaging in the intersubjective construction of meaning of particular works of art. Regarding the latter, I employed symbolic constructivism, a research method that “uses nonroutine artlike portrayal” as a means “to catalyze alternative knowings of conscious, tacit, and nonconscious beliefs and feelings” (Barry, 1996, p.411). In addition, after every visit to the field, I wrote detailed ethnographic fieldnotes that largely resulted from fleshing out jottings—i.e., phrases, key words, or “quickly rendered scribbles” (p.29) capturing particular actions, dialogues, and impressions—that I rapidly wrote down while in the

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<sup>4</sup> By engaging in “spect-acting,” I follow Gill (2011) who challenges the term “shadowing” and its assumption of a passive researcher in favor of “spect-acting” and its presumption of a researcher that actively engages in fieldwork action and, as a result, is able to attain a richer understanding of the phenomena under study.

field, or shortly after (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). In order to study the aesthetic dimension of novelty creation, with its embodied and relational elements, I had to immerse myself in the sensory context of my research participants. As a result, fieldwork was also a relational and embodied process in which sensory experience and feelings played a key role in reflexive thinking (see Cunliffe, 2002a; Koning & Ooi, 2013). Thus, consistent with my reflexive approach, and in an attempt to capture (and even process) feelings and reflexive thoughts, my fieldnotes also include accounts of my own internal conversations as a means to reflect upon and assign meaning to my experiences in the field (see Burkitt, 2012).

Lastly, I both audio- and video-taped in-depth interviews, as well as many of the hours I spent conducting ethnographic fieldwork. Interviews were transcribed and thoroughly analyzed along fieldnotes and secondary data. Secondary methods of data collection comprised any documentary sources to which I gained access, including books, newspapers, magazines, websites, blogs, posts on social media (specifically, Facebook and Twitter), and photographs. An explanation of the process of data analysis is provided in the next section.

## **Data Analysis**

Given my abductive approach, the “data collection” and “data analysis” stages of the research process did not unfold sequentially or independently. Rather, these stages occurred simultaneously as I spent time in the field. This approach allowed me to stay close to the data while using them to fuel theoretical insight (Klag & Langley, 2013). This approach was useful in helping me to continually make sense of the various themes emerging across the different organizational settings—a common approach in

ethnographic fieldwork (Emerson et al., 2011). As a result, while collecting empirical material, I engaged in a preliminary analysis of the data, specifically, while writing and processing information through detailed fieldnotes. While doing so, I also felt the need to complement my writing of fieldnotes with in-process memos that allowed me to develop (and keep track of) analytic themes emerging from my empirical materials; these in-process memos were fundamental in focusing and guiding my attention when I went back to the field to collect more data (see Emerson et al., 2011). By writing in-process memos, I was able to generate conceptual leaps by reflexively making sense of particular concepts emerging from the empirical material, as well as of the relationships between these concepts across the different organizational settings (see Emerson et al., 2011; Klag & Langley, 2013). Ultimately, in-process memoing allowed me to gain a “big picture” understanding of the key themes at play in the process of novelty co-creation, as well as to keep track of whether my fieldwork was still yielding new insights. When it no longer did, I exited the field.

After completing my field research, I further analyzed the gathered data by means of interaction analysis and thematic analysis. First, I used interaction analysis because I was studying, in real-time, the relational and embodied processes involved in the creation of novelty in the field of arts entrepreneurship. Interaction analysis is a method that allows researchers to study the “interaction of people with each other and with objects in their environment” (Sawyer & DeZutter, 2009, p.84). It allows to focus on observable (inter)actions between individuals, including “talk, nonverbal gestures and movements, and the use of objects” (Sawyer & DeZutter, 2009, p.84). Ultimately, interaction analysis allowed me to confirm key themes from my preliminary analysis and to further analyze,

at a micro-level, the patterns in the behaviors of the (inter)acting individuals (i.e., arts entrepreneur, researcher, client), as well as to analyze the processes resulting in and from these patterns. Specifically, I first watched the video recordings of my fieldwork and prepared logs that enabled to identify specific episodes that related to the research questions guiding my study (see LeBaron, 2005; Jordan & Henderson, 1995; Sawyer & DeZutter, 2009). I then used Transana, a video analysis software, to transcribe and micro-analyze key episodes flagged in my logs. In order to “avoid the trap of focusing primarily on verbal communication” (p.513), I purposefully watched video recordings before engaging in any transcribing—after all, this study goes beyond verbal communication to include other visible behaviors from research participants and, as a result, to consider the integration of verbal with nonverbal messages (Jones & LeBaron, 2002).

Second, the analysis of transcribed materials, as well as of other written data, entailed a thematic analysis technique that allowed to identify key themes based on their recurrence, repetition, and forcefulness (Owen, 1984). By taking such approach, themes were allowed to emerge from the data, as opposed to being imposed on them. This study’s research questions were key in guiding the analysis, but without blinding the emergence of themes from the data. Moreover, I also employed the constant comparative method, which refers to the process of repeatedly comparing the gathered data to emerging categories (Creswell, 2007). I applied this method until new insights no longer emerged from the gathered empirical material (Lee, Mitchell, & Sablinski, 1999).

In its entirety, this study allowed me to gather empirical materials pertaining to various facets of the process of novelty creation. However, for the purpose of this paper, and in keeping with the research questions stated above, I bound the results of my

analysis to the aesthetic dimension of entrepreneurial processes of co-creation, particularly striving for an in-depth understanding of the relational and embodied processes involved in the co-creation of novelty by both entrepreneur and customer. Overall, this study yielded three major dimensions within the aesthetics of novelty co-creation: (1) embodied imagination; (2) contemplation; and (3) consensus. These dimensions are explained thoroughly in the next section.

## Results

This section explores three major dimensions within the aesthetics of novelty co-creation. In practice, these dimensions interrelate with one another, in a continual and dynamic manner; however, for the purpose of shedding clear light on the particulars of each dimension, I address each one individually. In keeping with the micro-ethnographic and relational-materialist nature of this study, I include photographic illustrations of each dimension to aid in describing the particular details of interaction between human and non-human elements while spotlighting both verbal and nonverbal behaviors that occurred naturally during my fieldwork.

### An Aesthetic of Embodied Imagination

Imagination is a creative and generative process that allows individuals to move beyond current states or limits to both envision and create alternative futures (Chiles et al., 2013; Hjorth, 2013). As an embodied process, imagination is rooted in an individual's inner world and unique past, in the affective experience that arises from one's interaction with the outer world, and in one's conscious and unconscious intentionality<sup>5</sup> toward a particular future (Modell, 2003). From an aesthetics perspective, the study of embodied

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<sup>5</sup> Here, I follow Modell's (2003) definition of intentionality as the process of "directing the mind toward an object" (p.18).

imagination requires that we take a holistic approach to understanding how, by engaging the senses, the body informs—and is informed by—the mind, as well as how this process unfolds within a particular surrounding environment (see Taylor & Hansen, 2005).

As they began to imagine novelty into the future, research participants engaged in a process of imaginative seeing (and, in some cases, imaginative hearing) that entailed distorting a particular perception by imaginatively placing different interpretations on it (McGinn, 2004). Through a combination of perceiving, thinking, and imagining, research participants were able to look at a particular raw material and, while combining and recombining a variety of elements in both their minds and their surroundings, start *seeing* it as a finished product (see McGinn, 2004). This process is illustrated in Figure 1A, which shows Sasha interacting with two pieces of wood (raw materials that were to become the back of a custom classical guitar), re-arranging them in different ways, and then placing an acrylic guitar template on top of them as an aid to “envisioning how the client’s guitar will look like.” Sasha would often go through similar processes with his clients to help them make decisions on the wood combinations they would like in their custom guitars. During an interview, one of his clients pointed out that, in processes of co-creation, such imaginative processes are crucial to envisioning a nonexistent guitar because individuals need to “imagine what it might look like and then try to convey in words what [they are] imagining and what’s important about the imagined product that [they] want.” This client further described imagination as often happening in “a very quick ‘Boom!,’ almost like in a little more than a blink.” He further explained that despite its elusive and ephemeral nature, imagination is at the root of collaboratively creating a unique product.

**FIGURE 1A**  
**An Aesthetic of Embodied Imagination – Imaginative Seeing**



While collaborating in the creation of custom guitars, Sasha and his clients often had to engage in imaginative hearing, a process that is critical for the creation of a particular sound. One of his clients described this as “a fun and very interesting process—trying to describe the guitar I want and how it sounds in my head is like describing a color—it’s difficult! But we did it!” Specifically, this process entails a combination of perceiving (the sound of existing guitars through recordings or by playing them, as well as of the specific materials that are to be combined in the construction of the guitar), thinking (about one’s affective reactions to the sound of both existing instruments and of raw materials), and imagining (the various alternatives for the finished product) to start *hearing* the raw materials sound *as* a finished guitar. This process is illustrated in Figure 1B, in which Sasha is tapping, with his right hand, a piece of unfinished wood (a raw material that was to become the side of a custom classical guitar), attentively perceiving its sound, thinking about the customer’s specific requests for the guitar, and imagining how it will sound if this particular piece of wood is used in it.

**FIGURE 1B**  
**An Aesthetic of Embodied Imagination – Imaginative Hearing**



Sasha would also encourage clients to engage in imaginative hearing as they made decisions on the different types of wood they would like used in their custom guitars. To do so, Sasha would tap on different woods and then attempt to verbalize the differences in sound among the various possibilities for the future guitars, frequently asking customers, “Can you hear that?” and “Can you envision it?” As one client explained, this would allow Sasha to guide clients’ imaginations while they engaged their senses to make sense of Sasha’s description of the various options for the still nonexistent guitar:

[Sasha tapping on woods] was very helpful too because one of the options we had discussed was a cedar wood for the [guitar] top ... and the issue with cedar is it doesn’t have a crisp resonant sound to it, it’s got a dull, muddled, thud sound to it, and when [Sasha] tapped it, you could hear it! And you could hear the difference with the red spruce and it was really quite amazing! ... You’re using your sense of touch to activate the wood, to then hear it, so it’s multiple senses at play. ... All of that is important because then I was able to [understand] the words he was saying, ‘Oh muddy, oh yeah, I see why he says that’s muddy.’

By attending to bodily sensations, research participants were able to imaginatively see and hear, more clearly, the various options for their custom guitars. And as research participants experienced embodied imagination, they often engaged in nonverbal behaviors of which they were unconscious. For instance, while immersed in deep imagination and thought, research participants would frequently tilt their head sideways

(see Figure 1A's third picture) while striving for *seeing* the materials in front of them *as a final product*, be it a guitar (in the case of Sasha), a narrative box (in the case of Rudy), or a painting or sculpture (in the case of Adam). Oftentimes, they would also move their gaze away from the materials in front of them and, as illustrated in Figure 1B, would stare into midair—a nonverbal behavior individuals experience while “mentally drifting from the physical scene” and intentionally using their imaginations to start *seeing* or *hearing* raw materials *as finished products* (see Goffman, 1979, p.65 as cited in LeBaron, 2005, p.500; also see McGinn, 2004). In my fieldwork, I witnessed all arts entrepreneurs and most (if not all) clients engage in such nonverbal behaviors while experiencing embodied imagination; however, given their unconscious nature, these behaviors were never verbalized in participants’ explanations of the process, either during interviews or natural interactions in the field.

We have seen that, regardless of whether they are conscious of it or not, both entrepreneurs and clients experience embodied imagination while they collaborate in the creation of novelty. But embodied imagination may also be used by entrepreneurs as a means to connect with clients. Specifically, some entrepreneurs intentionally elicit a process of embodied imagination in clients, be it an existing or imagined client, because it allows them to touch people and make a difference in their lives—a motivation that drove all arts entrepreneurs in their daily activities, more so than the simple pursuit of economic profit. For example, while explaining the process of creating unique narrative boxes, Rudy expressed consciously striving for inciting affective reactions in clients while engaging their imaginations, a process that helps clients connect to her unique pieces:

You use items that foster a deep personal emotion in [clients], you use symbols that carry deep emotions, and you think about this as you are writing down the story. . . Sometimes just looking at your words might help you—‘Oh, that’s how I’ll represent it’—because it will help you visualize it in your head. . . We can tell so much without words, just by thinking of what it means to us and to [the client] and of how we want to use symbols.

In the quote above, Rudy emphasizes the importance of writing down a story and of looking at written words before actually engaging in the artistic creation of narrative boxes. This step in her creative process is fundamental as a means to find ways to tell a story without words, but with symbols instead, which inherently requires the use of imagination. To further explain the role of the senses in this imaginative process, Rudy added:

Having a sensory word bank is good because we use our senses to recollect things. If I smell apple pie, I’m back in my mom’s kitchen; if you make something that looks like old dry leaves, you don’t have to hear it crinkling, but you can actually, in your imagination, hear it crinkling. Your mind takes you there, imagining that you are walking through the forest, and you can actually smell that kind of moldy, mossy, barky kind of smell. . . Spiky, as in touch, as well as with seeing; how would you be able to show spiky [in your narrative box]? . . . If you can get them to think about the senses, then that will help to think about how to make their images or their stories in such a way that it will bring their stories alive.

Rudy’s quotes illustrate that at the root of creating a novel product is the conscious imagining and thinking of the ways that will make a client resonate with a particular piece, often by striving to elicit client’s embodied imaginations—a process that (unconsciously) unfolds in clients’ minds and bodies. It is also important to note that even though Rudy’s pieces are mostly visual (in the sense that they are not a musical instrument), she still strives for connecting with clients at a sensory level that goes beyond eliciting imaginative seeing (e.g., imagining a walk through the forest) to also stimulate clients’ imaginative hearing (e.g., imagining the sound of leaves crinkling),

imaginative smelling (e.g., imagining the smell of a moldy, mossy, barky forest), and imaginative touching (e.g., imagining the touching of a spiky object).

Regardless of the type of embodied imagining, clients' affective reactions to a work of art can vary quite a bit with the different stages of the process of co-creation. And during this process, it might be difficult for entrepreneurs to convey exactly what they are imagining the final product to be, leading the client to, most likely, imagine a different final product. Then, as clients realize that their custom piece is unfolding into a product that is not what they imagined, there is the potential for a wide array of feelings, from pleasant surprise and astonishment to bewilderment and confusion, to discontent and frustration. It makes sense that with two (or more) imagining individuals comes the potential for such emotional responses, given imagination's highly subjective nature and, consequently, the fact that it is extremely difficult to describe something that has not yet been created. For example, Sasha could look at a rough piece of wood and imaginatively see a guitar, Rudy could look at an old cigar box and imaginatively see a means of telling a story, and Adam could find a used cabinet door in the dumpster and imaginatively see a canvas waiting to be painted. But customers, while often accepting that a rough-looking piece of wood, a cigar box, and a cabinet door could become a work of art, they oftentimes found it "hard for [them] to visualize" all the details of the finished product, and depending on the stage of creation, they could experience an array of affective reactions to the work-in-progress. One of Adam's clients, for instance, expressed the following after seeing him work on her commissioned painting:

When I last looked at [the custom piece], I didn't think it was that appealing, all I could see were extremely red buildings on the background. ... I think that when I look at an unfinished piece, I don't actually see the same thing that Adam is seeing; he sees how it's going to look when it's close to finished, but I imagine

something different, similar to what I am actually seeing, which can feel disconcerting ... but Adam continued painting the background buildings like he had mentioned that he would do. I'm sure that's how he was initially imagining them to be, but I just couldn't see it because I'm not in his head. ... Eventually, with just one stroke, I saw a European-looking house emerge from the painting and immediately felt really excited and abruptly started moving my arms and telling Adam, 'I can see it now!! I can see it!!' but then I started missing my home town ... so I got a whole bunch of feelings at once, and just from one single stroke! It was amazing!

This quote illustrates that embodied imagination in processes of co-creation is highly subjective, not easily verbalized, and emotion-laden. It also shows that affective reactions in processes of embodied imagination are dynamic, complex, and non-linear. That is, with the simple stroke of a brush, an individual's affective reactions to an unfinished product may go from disconcertment to excitement to nostalgia to amazement, as in the case of Adam's client.

Despite its cryptic nature, embodied imagination is critical to novelty co-creation, be it by means of imaginative sensing (e.g., imaginative seeing, imaginative hearing, imaginative smelling, imaginative touching), unconscious nonverbal behaviors, and the affective reactions that arise while these processes unfold. As individuals collaborate in the creation of a unique product, imagination also informs—and is informed by—contemplation, a process that is rooted in embodied reflection, feeling, intuition, and conversations with self and other. I explore an aesthetic of contemplation in the next section.

### **An Aesthetic of Contemplation**

Contemplation is an embodied process that involves actively engaging one's perceptive and sensory faculties while thoughtfully observing and mindfully reflecting on experience (see Strati, 2000). At the root of contemplation is, thus, a process of embodied

reflection in which body and mind intertwine as individuals reach an aesthetic and open-ended understanding of lived experience (see Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991). Given its open-ended nature, knowledge that arises from aesthetic contemplation is often fluid and continually changing. Oftentimes, aesthetic understanding is not easily verbalized because of its tacit nature; as such, it may only be communicated through the interaction with artifacts and the “feel” that they arise in one’s body (Yanow, 2000). Such embodied experiences, along with processes of reflection, are often the wellspring of novel and creative ideas (Haworth, 1997).

While creating novelty, all research participants engaged in contemplation of artifacts and of their selves while processing, at times unconsciously, bodily sensations and imaginative thoughts. Specifically, they would stop their acts of creation, move away from the artistic product to “gain perspective” and “see how the piece [was] evolving as a whole,” as Adam explained, and then resume work on a particular detail. This process is illustrated in Figure 2A, which shows Adam working on a painting, leaning away from it to contemplate the process of creation while reflecting on where to go next in the process, and getting back to painting to materialize the product of that reflective process. Such moments of contemplation can take anywhere from a few seconds (as in the sequence of pictures shown in Figure 2A’s first row) to several minutes, as one calmly sips coffee or quietly gazes at the work-in-progress (as in Figure 2A’s second row of pictures). Regardless of whether they were aware of it or not, all research participants, including clients, engaged in such contemplative processes of embodied reflection.

**FIGURE 2A**  
**An Aesthetic of Contemplation – Embodied Reflection**



For Sasha, embodied reflection entailed “feeling” the guitars he was building in addition to thoughtfully observing and mindfully reflecting on their evolution and on any sensations arising from this process. For example, while tuning the braces inside the back of one guitar, Sasha explained how crucial it is to repeatedly “feel the wood” with the fingers during the process of scraping wood off the braces and giving them shape. This iterative process is rather tacit and ineffable; as such, I had to experience it for myself in order to completely understand his explanation. The following excerpt is a combination of my fieldnotes with the transcript from one of my fieldwork sessions with Sasha:

Sasha: Feeling is number one! ... Science doesn't do anything for me [in the tuning of the braces] ... Don't ask me for a formula, see, I don't understand them and I don't give a damn, because they don't mean anything to me. [Feeling] means everything to me, ‘cause when I pull this little plain and it removes wood, you feel the wood, you feel the material you're working ... So it's all about feeling, I'm telling you. I don't know how to explain it to you but this is about right, you hear that? [Sasha lightly taps the back of the guitar by my ear so that I can hear how tuned the braces are]. That's about right there, so I just stop. ... It's all about learning, nothing else ... and I believe it's learned through the years.

Feel. This. [With Sasha's guidance, I feel the braces he's just scraped and understand what he's talking about. I, too, can't explain it through words.] ... it's also some small percentage of surprise, I kind of know what's this going to sound like, roughly, but I don't know exactly, so that keeps the thrill, it's interesting ... most of us [luthiers] don't know what we're doing exactly, we're just experimenting, you know? Because it's a darkness, it's just intuition, that's all.

For Sasha, embodied reflection in processes of novelty creation entails feeling the wood, reflecting on sensations and surprises, and following one's intuition. Although he uses scientific measurements and formulas to build specific parts of his instruments, for instance to calculate the distance between fret slots on guitars' fretboards, Sasha fervently emphasized, several times during my 11 months of fieldwork, how important tacit and aesthetic knowledge are to building a unique guitar (although, he did not explicitly use the words "tacit" and "aesthetic"). He also spotlighted intuition, many times over, as being fundamental to the creation of unique products. As one of Sasha's clients put it while describing the process of co-creation with Sasha,

It's mystical science, and that's all Sasha; he uses a lot of intuition, a process that I don't understand and I don't think he can explain ... It's magic! I know it sounds strange, but it's true! It's a lot of magic ... [This process of co-creation] involves all the senses: Tapping the woods, listening to them, looking at them; but verbalizing this process is impossible.

Although difficult to explain through words, intuition was often verbalized by research participants as relating to "mystical science," "a darkness," a "gut instinct," or a "gut feeling." Research participants also explained that both intuition and reflection take place as they create unique products and make sense of them. Rudy, for example, explained how reflection is what allowed her to make sense of, and ultimately understand, creative actions arising from largely intuitive processes:

[Drift] is one of those pieces that I made that I didn't really understand until after I made it. It's so intrinsic, it's so instinctive ... sometimes you place something in a [narrative] box because of your "gut instinct." ... I made [Drift] and I sat and

looked at it, and looked at it, and, then, it kind of told itself to me. ... And with my etchings, a lot of it is just feeling first and reading it later on.

While Rudy's quote illustrates that she engaged in contemplative reflection to retrospectively make sense and give meaning to specific creative actions, Sasha's quote above illustrates that reflection and creative action co-occur, informing one another as the creation of a unique product unfolds. Thus, as these two quotes show, reflection in processes of novelty co-creation may require individuals to engage in thinking and questioning that occurs in either retrospect or in the moment—what Yanow and Tsoukas (2009) term “reflection-*on*-action” and “reflection-*in*-action,” respectively. Despite Rudy's quote illustrating a process of “reflection-*on*-action” only, what I witnessed during my field research was that it is more common for entrepreneurs to engage in a combination of both types of reflection, rather than only one. In fact, artists often pulled from thinking that had occurred retrospectively while reflecting on the processes in which they were engaged at the time of actual creation. This interweaving of both “reflection-*on*-action” (reflection on past actions that unfolds in the present) and “reflection-*in*-action” (reflection on present actions that unfolds concurrently with those actions) resulted in knowledge that was fluid and continually evolving and that research participants would continue to use in future creations. Important to note is that, in my fieldwork, these reflective processes were often accompanied by forward-looking thought and expectations of what the product could turn out to be (or sound) like in the future and of how potential buyers might react to it. In this sense, past, present and future were weaved together in a continuous flux of reflective and imaginative thought—a process that is aided by conversations with self and others.

As entrepreneurs create unique products with clients, they need to engage in several conversations throughout the creation process. But entrepreneurs may engage in conversations with a variety of other individuals (for instance, other entrepreneurs, artists, clients, friends, and colleagues). In the case of Adam, conversations about a unique artwork often unfolded between him and his wife Hyanneke, particularly when the goal was to devise ways to connect with future (or imagined) customers and, ultimately, to persuade them to purchase his artwork. Figure 2B shows Adam and Hyanneke discussing the best way to capture Adam's artwork through photographs that were to be posted on the Adam B. Cook website, which Hyanneke was building at the time. Their conversation surrounded technical issues such as lighting, camera and painting angles, and image quality and definition; the goal was to upload professionally-looking photographs that captured, as close as possible, Adam's art and that could be used to produce and sell prints of his paintings—a technique that they created to boost sales, given that a print could be sold for much less than the painting, thus allowing them to sell several reproductions of just one painting and, thus, to capitalize as much as possible on Adam's artistic efforts.

The first row of pictures in Figure 2B shows an actual conversation between the two, in which Hyanneke uses gestural language to convey to Adam some of the technical struggles she was experiencing with the photographing process but that she could not easily convey with words alone. In the second row of pictures in Figure 2B, Adam and Hyanneke were not actually talking to each other; rather, they were either contemplating the camera (second row's first picture) or the artwork (second row's second picture),

alternating repeatedly between the two positions while engaging in a deep reflective process that entailed “silent” conversations with their individual selves.

**FIGURE 2B**  
**An Aesthetic of Contemplation – (Internal) Conversations**



Such conversations, which were experienced by research participants while engaging in aesthetic contemplation, entailed talking with one’s self *as if* they were another person—a process akin to what Burkitt (2010) terms “internal conversations” or “micro-dialogues.” In essence, these conversations are “a silent and invisible series of dialogues that we intermittently hold with ourselves or with the images or voices of others” (Burkitt, 2010, p.307). Through internal conversations, individuals are able to reflect on their selves and actions, on imagined others (say, for instance, a client with whom an entrepreneur is co-creating a unique product or a client that does not actually exist but that the entrepreneur hopes to persuade to purchase artwork in the future), as well as on the emotions that arise from these reflective and imaginative processes (see

Burkitt, 2012). More specifically, research participants would often point to the “voices in the head” and their “inner talk,” as Sasha put it, as fundamental in helping them create unique products and understand and envision what was going to resonate with customers. Sasha further explained that while tuning the braces inside the back of his guitars, the “voices in the head” would simply tell him “Stop! Don’t mess with that no more!” and that’s how he knew that the braces were tuned and that scraping more wood would only destroy them. And while Adam explained that it was the “conflict in the head” that allowed him to reflect on how to price an artwork, Rudy expressed that when she is engaged in art creation, her “head is constantly going, making connections between things” and that she “can’t stop her brain, not even to sleep at night.”

Part of this internal process unfolds by means of a dialogical unconscious through which others enter into our imaginations with their “implicit or hidden voices, wishes, and desires which may structure our speech and action” (Burkitt, 2010, p.320). In my study, I noticed that entrepreneurs would enter into dialogues with themselves to reflect on the creative process while considering the wishes and preferences of their clients. Likewise, customers would reflect on conversations with artists before making decisions on how the creation process was to move forward. For example, when one of Sasha’s clients was faced, during their first meeting, with the need to choose the wood for the top of his custom guitar (which would have both visual and sonorous implications for the final product), he told Sasha “I want to go home and think about it. . .I want to sleep on it.” During an interview with me at a later time, this client further explained why he did avoid making a decision at that moment:

I said I want to think about it because . . . when I want to sleep on something, it’s usually where I want my subconscious to kick in and work for me. I purposefully

used my subconscious to help me make that decision; I slept on it at least one night, I think maybe two, but at least one for sure. And it became crystal clear after having slept on it and let my subconscious work on it that it was red spruce that I wanted, and that became really clear.

Although most research participants were not as consciously aware of the usefulness of one's unconscious (or subconscious) as Sasha's client was, many of them engaged in behaviors that would allow them to temporarily suspend conscious reflection and, as a result, to let an unconscious creative process take place. These behaviors were often unrelated to the creative process; for instance, Adam taking a break to smoke a cigarette or to eat some food, Hyanneke "calling it a day for today" after reaching a particular challenge and deciding to run errands, Rudy going out for a jog before resuming artistic creation, and Sasha taking a break to drink coffee or to listen to music. But regardless of the type of behavior or of its length, it typically culminated with a moment of (sometimes sudden) realization or inspiration on how to proceed with the creative process.

As illustrated, aesthetic contemplation is critical to the co-creation of novelty. Individuals engage in contemplation through such processes as embodied reflection, feeling, intuition, and conversations with self and other. At times, these processes may unfold unconsciously; yet, they are still crucial to the creation of unique products. Both embodied imagination, which was explored in the previous section, and contemplation are aesthetic processes that inform each other as individuals co-create novelty. They are also at the root of consensus, which comprises the experiencing of persuasion, compromise, and the creation of meaning by both entrepreneurs and clients. I explore an aesthetic of consensus in the next section.

## An Aesthetic of Consensus

Consensus is the process by which individuals develop a shared understanding of particular phenomena, as well as of one another. In essence, consensus is reached by means of an intersubjective process that entails the interactive exchange of views between individuals who recognize and explore similarity and difference in their interpretations with the ultimate goal of co-constructing meaning (see Benjamin, 1990; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). When creating novelty intersubjectively, arts entrepreneurs move beyond their individual interpretations to consider and merge them with those of clients, whether these have been verbalized by actual clients or simply imagined by the artist. In this sense, novelty emerges in the interactions between individuals (actual or imagined), or in what Bradbury and Lichtenstein (2000) term “the space between.” In this space between individuals who collaborate in the creation of novelty, consensus is reached through three important processes—persuasion, compromise, and the co-creation of meaning—that are intricately intertwined but that for the sake of theoretical clarity, I explore separately in the following paragraphs.

Persuasion is the act of convincing others to do or believe in something. In this study, all research participants attempted to persuade—or were persuaded by—the other(s) involved in the creation of a novel product. For example, while discussing the features of a custom piece with a client, Rudy was persuaded to consider adding a particular element to a custom narrative box—something she had never agreed to do for a client up until that day:

[Rudy and her client discuss the details of a custom narrative box that is based on a print titled Drift, a piece that honors Rudy’s mother and her struggles with Alzheimer’s. In the print, a boat hovers over a desert and a wooden folding chair rests on the sand; in the narrative box, which is still in progress, a similar boat

hovers over an ocean but there is no sand on which to place a wooden folding chair.]

Client: Why don't you have a little chair in [the Drift narrative box] like you do in the [Drift] print?

Rudy: Because that chair, the folding chair, represents me; the wooden folding chair represents me. ... Now, if you look at the [Drift] print, that's on a desert, that's not anywhere near water.

Client: Oh ... but you would still have a chair by water in the ocean, because you would be watching the ocean...

Rudy: You could, uh-huh, you could...

[Rudy pauses for a few seconds and changes the subject; eventually the client comes back to the chair.]

Client: But I do like the chair ... when I see the chair, I think of myself waiting for the boat to come down [symbolizing the client's wait for moments of lucidity in the mind of her mother, who also suffered with Alzheimer's disease]

[The client suddenly gets very emotional and starts tearing up]

Rudy: So you actually want it with the box. I've never once considered adding the chair to any of these [narrative boxes].

[The client goes on to explain her interpretation of the piece and the elements in it.]

Client: That chair is so important to me ... there's probably nobody else but us that understand it.

Rudy: I love the idea of you, me, putting the wooden folding chair in there. I love that! ... I would never think of doing that for anybody else.

Although Rudy was initially hesitant to add an element that represented herself to a client's custom piece, the client was ultimately able to persuade Rudy to change her mind. By sharing with Rudy the profound meaning that the chair (and the piece as a whole) had for her, the client managed to connect, at a very deep level, with the artist, who in turn empathized with the client. This allowed both individuals to develop a deep understanding of each other and of their painful experience with a mother suffering from Alzheimer's disease. As this shared understanding unfolded, Rudy's demeanor also changed, from avoidance to contentment with sharing her symbolic representation of self with another.

In another example, Adam and his wife Hyanneke expressed that knowing how to persuade a potential client is fundamental for selling art. In Adam's words:

The most recent purchase, I was like [during a get-together at our place], “Hey, *anybody* wants to buy these two paintings for \$250?” It was kind of directed toward [a recurring client who is a savvy businessman] a little bit, and he bit it, so I was like, “Okay! Cool!” So, to [that client] you frame it as a deal and, I mean, he knows it’s a deal! He’s a pretty good businessman so he knows for sure, so you present a deal that you know he can’t pass up so you can make a little money. Knowing how to persuade does help, there are some people that I’ve talked to and I’ve said “Oh, you need to buy this, this is for you, it fits your personality, something that you’d be proud of owning.” Just like I did with the Stravinsky portrait that I painted thinking of [another client who eventually purchased the painting].

And Hyanneke explained that pricing can itself be a means of persuading individuals to purchase Adam’s artwork:

You don’t want to make the price too expensive because people won’t be interested. You have to think of what people think of. So, art collectors probably won’t care about price if they see something they want, but the average person will probably go for the cheaper ones; and some other people like [our client who is a savvy businessman] will buy it if it is a deal.

Thus, persuading clients to purchase artwork is important to arts entrepreneurs who create novel pieces. At times, arts entrepreneurs create a particular piece thinking of an imagined client, who may even be someone they actually know but who does not realize, yet, that they will be purchasing one of Adam’s pieces. In this case, Adam tries to convince them to purchase it by explaining how the piece fits with the client’s personality or taste. In other cases, Adam and Hyanneke thoughtfully price a piece according to the type of client they are targeting and appropriately frame it in a way that the client simply “can’t pass up.” Thus, persuasion is a process that requires entrepreneurs to mindfully reflect on potential customers and on what makes them tick, which varies from customer to customer.

In order to reach a consensus, individuals often need to compromise; that is, they need to adjust to a situation by accommodating a differing idea. Compromise and

persuasion often go hand in hand. For example, after Rudy was persuaded to grant her client's request to add a wooden folding chair to her narrative box, she was very clear about her own conditions on this request, which in turn required the client to compromise:

Rudy: I could actually find a small chair but for me the thing is: It *has* to be wooden, and that's not going to be easy for me to find ... and it's important that it be really either antique or can be antiqued. I won't use composition and nor will I use plastic. Can't have that!

Client: Yes, yes.

In this example, both artist and client compromised: Rudy agreed to change her views on adding a chair to a custom narrative box, as long as the client settled for a small, wooden chair. In another example, one of Sasha's clients explicitly expressed having to compromise due to technical restrictions relating to the guitar-making process:

I went to Sasha with a kind of vision in my head. ... I was thinking about a sound hole that might have twenty holes in the top of the guitar in a certain artistic or aesthetic array that I was interested in, and it became pretty clear, pretty quick, that Sasha couldn't do it for technical reasons. ... So there was definitely a compromise, technically, with what Sasha was able to do ... because he flat-out said "Look, here's the technique I use to join this piece to that piece, and with these fifteen, twenty circles, I can't do it." ... And then there was a compromise with myself, which took longer in time, of what I was really wanting.

As this excerpt illustrates, compromising does not only entail adjusting to another's conditions, in this case, conditions of a technical nature; it may also involve compromising with one's self, by means of thoughtful and embodied reflection. As this client further explained:

Over time, when I saw the pieces come together and I saw other guitars of the type I was looking at. ... [I realized that] what I was suggesting would destroy that [classical guitar] motif, that theme would be trashed up. I then started to become uncomfortable myself with that thought I had about imagining how the guitar might look in that weird way, so it took me a little bit longer to come back to Sasha's decision, but in a different way. His was a technical reason. Mine was more a feeling of incongruence, that the idea I had was going to be incongruent

with what a classical guitar is. ... The more I thought about it, the more it became clear to me that it would destroy the essence of what I was after.

Thus, compromise can entail adjusting to one's own feelings, resulting from an embodied process of both reflection and imagination. In particular, both the conversations between the entrepreneur and the client and the client's internal conversations required the client to adjust his vision and specific imaginings to avoid "feelings of incongruence."

Although these could be interpreted as rationalizations to come to terms with the entrepreneur's conditions, they can also be viewed as processes of persuading and compromising with one's self.

Persuasion and compromise in processes of novelty co-creation often develop by means of conversations that unfold in the space between entrepreneur and client. These conversations entail both verbal and non-verbal communication (e.g., gestures, facial expressions demonstrating affective reactions such as tearing up, frowning, or smiling) and interactions with not only human elements (the individuals themselves), but also nonhuman components (e.g., the unique product being developed). This relational process is illustrated in Figure 3A, which shows Rudy and her client talking to each other about the Drift narrative box, interacting with the box by touching and looking at it, gesturing as a means of communicating an idea to the other and thus of persuading them to accept their wishes, and, finally, reaching a compromise, which in this case was accompanied by smiles and feelings of satisfaction (as both were happy with reaching a consensus to add a small wooden chair to the box).

**FIGURE 3A**  
**An Aesthetic of Consensus – Persuasion and Compromise**



Co-creating meaning is also at the root of the process by which entrepreneurs and clients reach a consensus. Because the co-creation of novelty entails more than one individual, the co-creation of meaning, which unfolds in “the space between” (Bradbury & Lichtenstein, 2000), often requires individuals to articulate and merge multiple meanings (Cunliffe & Karunanayake, 2013). For example, going back to the example of Rudy and her client discussing the Drift narrative box, at some point, both individuals entered a dialogue about the meaning of a small clock that was hanging inside the narrative box:

Client: I love that little clock in there!  
 Rudy: Good! I’m glad you like that!  
 Client: Because it has a big meaning, it represents-  
 Rudy: The passage of time, sure!

Client: Yes. ... This is important to me, the time feature.

Rudy: ... And you know what else I love about this [clock]? ... It might actually still be functional,...which I think is so way cool. So you can actually reach in there, wind it up and have it working for a while. I love that idea!

Client: Oh, but time doesn't work [when you have Alzheimer's].

Rudy: No, see the thing is time keeps moving, whether you have Alzheimer's or not.

Client: Oh, time keeps on moving but [people] don't, yes... isn't that sad?

In this excerpt, both individuals agreed that the little clock hanging inside the narrative box represented the passage of time; in fact, they even completed each other's sentences. However, one saw time as having stopped for Alzheimer's patients while the other disagreed. After articulating their differing views, artist and client ended up agreeing that time keeps on moving but that people afflicted with Alzheimer's disease don't. Thus, in this example, consensus is reached by articulating dissimilar meanings (originating from different individuals), which are then collaboratively shaped into shared meaning, thus culminating in insight that is co-constructed.

As part of the process of novelty and meaning co-creation, both entrepreneur and client become "one" with the product being developed. For example, one of Sasha's clients expressed, at several occasions, that "having a guitar custom made is great because you become part of the instrument; you closely work with Sasha to create something special." Specifically, Sasha would work closely with his clients to help them make choices (for example, on the combinations of woods, the type of inlay, the overall design of the guitar) that would have deep and personal meaning to them. Another of his clients even described Sasha as "a Zen master taking a toddler by the hand, and teaching him, and steering him in the direction that meant the things he wanted." Sasha also expressed that it was important for him to be part of his custom guitars, along with his clients. As such, he would combine clients' meaning-laden requests with his own need to

be part of the final product. For example, he intentionally designed specific parts of his guitars, embedding them with deep meaning and symbolism pertaining to and representing himself only. The design of his guitars' headstocks, for instance, is inspired by the byzantine style of churches in Dalmatia, where he used to live before migrating to the United States. This design was so important and meaningful to him that if a client would request a change on the headstock design, Sasha would simply refuse to do so. After learning about the deep meaning that the headstock had for Sasha, a client expressed:

See, one of the things that I really wanted to come out of this guitar, is ... that I wanted [Sasha] to come out, and I wanted it to be something he's proud of. To learn that the headstock was designed after the church steeples in his home area, that I really liked a lot. When I heard that, I thought, "Oh that's cool, I like that!" That gives it meaning to me, because [the headstock] didn't have any meaning, now it has meaning.

The co-creation of meaning between entrepreneurs and clients is an embodied process that often entails the experiencing of very deep emotions. Figure 3B illustrates this embodied process of meaning co-creation, which in the case of Rudy and her client, entailed the experiencing of overwhelming emotions and, thus, the shedding of tears. In this sequence of photographs, we see, first, the client describing (aided by gesture) the deep meaning of some of the elements in the narrative box; she, then, becomes extremely emotional and tears up while sharing painful memories about her mother and her struggles with Alzheimer's, at which moment Rudy tries to comfort her by holding her arm and, finally, sharing that she, too, often starts crying when explaining to others the meaning of this emotional piece. Although the client was embarrassed for breaking down during their meeting, this embodied reaction allowed the two individuals to connect at a

very deep level and to become one with each other and with the meaningful narrative box, all while developing a shared meaning of the artwork.

### **FIGURE 3B**

#### **An Aesthetic of Consensus – Co-Creation of Meaning**



In closing, works of art that are intended to be sold to a customer are typically not the creation of a lone, isolated artist. Rather, arts entrepreneurs often include potential customers in the creation process by allowing them to either actively collaborate in the process or imaginatively enter their minds as they tailor a product to fit the preferences of that potential customer. This collaboration between entrepreneur and client entails an aesthetic of consensus, of which persuasion, compromise, and meaning co-creation are fundamental elements. Although consensus was explored independently from embodied imagination and contemplation, it is important to re-emphasize that these aesthetic processes are intricately intertwined.

### **Discussion**

In this paper, I venture into a side of entrepreneurship that is often overlooked in research: The aesthetics of entrepreneurship. In doing so, I propose three major dimensions involved in the co-creation of novelty between entrepreneur and customer: 1) embodied imagination, 2) contemplation, and 3) consensus. The results of this study

suggest that a variety of processes—aesthetic and embodied, imaginative and reflective, conscious and unconscious, relational and material—are involved in the co-creation of novel ideas. Arising from its relational approach, this study’s results also emphasize that individuals may become entrepreneurial because they want to touch others by making a difference in their lives. This is in stark contrast with the extant entrepreneurship literature’s dominant assumption that entrepreneurs behave rationally; that is, that their main goal is to maximize both utility and economic profit. More generally, this paper contributes to the field of organizational entrepreneurship by spotlighting the role of the customer in the entrepreneurial process while demonstrating that arts entrepreneurship is a fruitful venue for understanding processes of novelty co-creation.

The results of this study can be summarized in three main points that, although described independently, do intertwine with one another. First, embodied imagination is fundamental to processes of novelty co-creation because it allows individuals to generate ideas and products that are different from current and past offerings. Specifically, entrepreneurial embodied imagination refers to the process by which entrepreneurs engage their minds, in concert with their bodies, to envision—and ultimately actualize—novel possibilities for the future (see Hjorth, 2015). As such, it is a generative process that arises from individuals’ unique past, their affective reactions to the present, and intentions for future action. While collaborating in the creation of unique products, all research participants used their senses while imagining; as such, they engaged in the continual intertwining of body and mind to experience imaginative seeing, hearing, smelling, or touching. Entrepreneurs, in particular, explicitly used embodied imagination

as a means to evoke and foster emotions in clients. Their goal was to connect with clients and, as a result, persuade them to purchase their artwork.

Second, contemplation plays a critical role in the co-creation of novelty because it allows individuals to relate to and reflect on the aesthetic experience and needs of themselves and others. Contemplation is, thus, an embodied process that entails reflection, feeling, intuition, and conversations with self and others. As the arts entrepreneurs in my study engaged in contemplative reflection, they engaged, for the most part, in a combination of both “reflection-on-action” and “reflection-in-action” (see Yanow & Tsoukas, 2009). What was surprising about the emergence of these processes from the empirical material was their implications in terms of temporality: Reflection on past actions often unfolded concurrently with reflection on present and future actions. In other words, as entrepreneurs created novelty, past, present, and future intertwined in a continuous flow of reflective, imaginative, and intuitive thought. In this sense, novelty emerged in temporal flux, in the indivisible continuity of transition and duration (Bergson, 1946; also see Hjorth, 2013; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). Throughout this process, a dialogical unconscious process (Burkitt, 2010) often took place, as entrepreneurs considered, through imaginative reflection, the needs and wishes of clients for the creation of a completely novel product.

Third, consensus is essential to the co-creation of novelty between entrepreneur and client because it is through this aesthetic process that the views and wishes of each individual are incorporated into a unique product. Novelty creation ultimately emerges in “the space between” (Bradbury & Lichtenstein, 2000) individuals, from the interactions between individuals, by means of persuasion, compromise, and meaning co-creation. As

individuals collaborate in the creation of novelty, they become “one” with one another, and with the unique product they are developing. This results in both a product that is profoundly meaningful and a deep connection between individuals. Because this is an embodied process, individuals may experience a wide array of emotions as they share personal meanings, resolve disagreements, and agree on the details of the final product.

### **Implications for Entrepreneurship**

The results of this study have several implications for the field of organizational entrepreneurship. First, this paper sheds new light on the role of the customer in processes of novelty creation. Specifically, it explores the processes—relational and embodied—by which entrepreneurs relate to, and interact with, existing and imagined customers as they engage in the co-creation of novelty. Customers are essential to the entrepreneurial process not only because entrepreneurs are dependent on customers’ willingness to purchase a particular product or service, but also because customers continually enter entrepreneurs’ minds, both consciously and unconsciously, throughout the process of novelty generation and, as such, influence the development of entrepreneurial ideas. Yet, the entrepreneurship literature rarely explores the role of the customer in the entrepreneurial process. As such, the results of this study might prove useful to those wishing to further explore entrepreneurial processes from an Austrian perspective, particularly those operating from a subjectivist perspective to build on Mises’s (1949/1966) concept of “consumer sovereignty” or those taking a radical subjectivist approach to exploring empathy (with possible future customers) in processes of entrepreneurial creative imagination (e.g., Chiles et al., 2010a).

Second, stemming from its relational materialist approach, this paper illuminates intersubjectivity and embodiment as essential to the entrepreneurial process. Entrepreneurship is rarely explored as both an intersubjective and embodied process. This paper shows that taking such approach—and thus viewing entrepreneurs not as disembodied minds but, rather, as individuals who use their bodies to sense, feel, imagine, and interact with others—allows us to move beyond a focus on entrepreneurs' cognitions to shed clearer light into entrepreneurs' embodied imaginations, aesthetic experience, and relationality in processes of co-creation. The result is a holistic view of the entrepreneurial process—one in which entrepreneurs are not rational and independent individuals but, rather, imaginative and socially embedded beings who need to be responsive to (and often compromise with) the wishes of customers. This paper might, thus, be useful to scholars following in the footsteps of others who have recently endeavored to explore entrepreneurship more holistically (e.g., Cornelissen et al., 2012; Hjorth, 2013; Kisfalvi & Maguire, 2011; Sørensen, 2006). Specifically, they might find this study's results useful in further exploring embodiment and intersubjectivity in processes of novelty co-creation; relatedly, they might find its methodological approach useful in devising ways to continue to explore the aesthetics of entrepreneurship.

Third, this paper provides new insight into both the aesthetics of entrepreneurship and the field of arts entrepreneurship. These areas are important because aesthetics is at the core of entrepreneurship in general and processes of creation in particular (Hjorth & Steyaert, 2009), and arts entrepreneurship is a unique and prolific area for studying creative processes, novelty creation, and processes of transformation (see Scherdin & Zander, 2011a). Surprisingly, however, both are currently largely understudied in

entrepreneurship. As this study might show, scholars whose approach is rooted in philosophical assumptions that are not commonly used (or even appropriate) in mainstream studies, might find these areas as fruitful venues for their research efforts. For example, one of the benefits of researching aesthetic experience and arts entrepreneurship is that one is required to challenge the dominant assumption that entrepreneurs are primarily motivated by wealth creation and that their actions are taken in the “pursuit of profit and commercial gain” (Bridgstock, 2013, p.125) in favor of a view in which the pursuit of autonomy and of creative freedom—what Rindova et al. (2009) term “entrepreneuring as emancipation”—plays a greater role in entrepreneurs’ creative activities.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

Upon reflection, I recognize some limitations that may suggest possible directions for future research. First, the results of this study show that novelty co-creation in general—and embodied imagination and contemplation in particular—is facilitated by a number of unconscious processes that, given their ineffable nature, might not be easily verbalized by research participants. In fact, research participants may not even be aware of their experiencing of such processes. Perhaps for this reason, the role of the unconscious is not as pronounced in the study’s third dimension—consensus. However, given the relational nature of consensus and of its processes of persuasion, compromise, and meaning co-creation, the unconscious is likely to play an important role here as well. Thus, future researchers might consider exploring, in greater depth, the role of the unconscious in relational processes of novelty co-creation. Theoretically, they may take a contemporary psychoanalytic approach to explore how unconscious processes such as

projection, transference, and countertransference might influence individuals as they collaborate in the generation of novelty (see Diamond, 2014). Methodologically, they may involve research participants in the analysis of specific video data, focusing attention on, for example, such nonverbal behaviors as head-tilting, gazing away, and staring into midair to have them reflect on their aesthetic experiencing of the process. Given the ephemeral nature of such processes, however, it would be advisable for such discussions to occur shortly after these behaviors are video-recorded.

Second, aesthetic experience is a highly subjective phenomenon that is neither directly observable nor easily verbalized. Thus, in order to fully understand how the process of novelty creation unfolded, I often had to experience it for myself (e.g., feeling the texture of a guitar's braces as Sasha incrementally scrapped wood off). My original research design did not include becoming involved with the creation process, but given my reflexive approach, I soon realized that embracing this idea would prove fruitful. Upon reflection, I believe that combining my participations in the field as a researcher with my own experience as both an artist and an entrepreneur proved very advantageous in further understanding some of these ineffable processes. In the future, scholars may consider taking a similar approach to studying highly subjective processes by designing studies that strive for full immersion in the process so that they can experience the focal phenomena for themselves. For example, they might engage in enactive research, which is a methodology that holistically engages researchers in the research process (Johannesson, 2011). By experiencing novelty co-creation for themselves, scholars may then be able to fully understand how this process unfolds for both entrepreneurs and clients.

Third, the results of this study relate to one specific area within the broader field of entrepreneurship—that of arts entrepreneurship. I narrowed my study to this area for two reasons. First, arts entrepreneurship is currently an overlooked area within organizational entrepreneurship (Lindqvist, 2011). Second, it is a promising camp for exploring processes of novelty co-creation between entrepreneurs and customer (Scherdin & Zander, 2011b). Although the three dimensions proposed in this study may very well be transferable (see Creswell, 2007) to other entrepreneurship areas, further exploration is still needed. Thus, future scholars may consider conducting empirical studies aimed at grounding and further developing the results of these study in such areas as social entrepreneurship, corporate entrepreneurship, technology entrepreneurship, and indigenous entrepreneurship.

In conclusion, despite its central role in the entrepreneurial process, the customer is often overlooked by organizational entrepreneurship scholars. In order to address this oversight, I venture into the aesthetics of entrepreneurship to explore an unusual area—that of arts entrepreneurship. To do so, I conducted an 11-month-long multi-sited micro-ethnography that allowed me to shed light on the processes—relational and embodied—by which entrepreneurs experience and interact with both their surrounding environment and existing or imagined customers as they engage in the co-creation of novelty. My hope is that this paper helps pave the way for future entrepreneurship scholars to explore, in greater depth, the processes by which entrepreneurs relate to and collaborate with customers in processes of novelty creation, as these are essential to the entrepreneurial process.

CREATIVE IMAGINING:  
DEVELOPING AND GROUNDING A PROCESS MODEL  
FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Paper III

Abstract

Although imagination has been recognized as essential to the entrepreneurial process, the field of organizational entrepreneurship currently lacks an in-depth understanding of creative entrepreneurial imagination and the processes by which it unfolds. To begin addressing this oversight, I propose a process model of creative entrepreneurial imagination yielding five elements—*experiencing, early creating, reaching an impasse and gestating, (re)creating and evaluating imagined futures, and choosing and enterprising*. This dynamic, nonlinear process model was developed from a set of readings addressing the topic of imagination from various disciplinary perspectives and grounded in the lived experiences of a team of arts entrepreneurs by means of a 25-month-long case study of a nonprofit venture operating within the music industry. In addition to illuminating the specific processes—self-reflective and embodied, conscious and unconscious—through which entrepreneurs imagine and generate novelty, this paper contributes to the field of organizational entrepreneurship by providing scholars with a basis for further exploring the understudied topic of creative entrepreneurial imagination.

*Keywords:* entrepreneurial process, creative imagining, process model

## **Introduction**

“Logic will get you from A to B. Imagination will take you everywhere.” – *A. Einstein*

“What is now proved was once only imagin’d.” – *W. Blake*

Creative imagination is essential to the entrepreneurial process, for without it entrepreneurs would not be able to create novel ideas and products. This notion is not new; in the previous century, economists such as Lachmann (1986) and Shackle (1979) emphasized the forward-looking processes of imagination as drivers of entrepreneurial action (Chiles, Vultee, Gupta, Greening, & Tuggle, 2010b; Loasby, 2007). Specifically, Shackle (1979) reflected on the connection between future-oriented imagination and entrepreneurial choice, which results in partly *ex nihilo* creation (i.e., the origin of a new beginning, which flows from entrepreneurs’ subjective expectations). Similarly, Lachmann (1986) suggested that by engaging their creative imaginations, entrepreneurs continually generate novelty through a process of *ex nihilo* creation. Organizational entrepreneurship scholars have also recognized the critical role of imagination in the entrepreneurial process. For instance, more than a decade ago, Sarasvathy (2001a) encouraged scholars taking an economic approach to entrepreneurship to place imagination at “center stage” (p.1). In a similar vein, Chiles, Bluedorn, and Gupta (2007) urged entrepreneurship scholars to pay closer attention to the “central, but largely neglected” issue of “the creation of opportunities through human imagination directed toward an envisioned future” (p.486). Despite these calls, however, relatively little attention has been paid to creative entrepreneurial imagination (i.e., the generation of novelty through forward-looking imaginative acts).

Imagining is fundamental to the entrepreneurial process—it allows entrepreneurs to create original ideas, new resource combinations, novel products, and unique organizations through a multilevel disequilibrium process that ultimately results in social order. This much has been recognized by organizational entrepreneurship scholars, who have explored the role of imagination in (1) creating entrepreneurial ideas, insights, and opportunities (e.g., Cornelissen & Clarke, 2010; Dew, Velamuri, & Venkataraman, 2004; Sarasvathy, 2001a,b; Witt, 1998, 2007; Wood & McKinley, 2010), (2) generating entrepreneurial action to introduce products or create organizations, including imagining combinations of resources and activities needed to materialize entrepreneurial ideas, insights, and opportunities (e.g., Chiles et al., 2010a,b, 2013; Foss, Klein, Kor, & Mahoney, 2008; Foss & Klein, 2012; Kor, Mahoney, & Michael, 2007; Witt, 2007), (3) driving disequilibrium entrepreneurial market processes (e.g., Chiles et al., 2007, 2010a,b), and (4) achieving social order under genuine uncertainty (e.g., Chiles et al., 2010a; Loasby, 2007, 2011; McMullen, 2010; McVea, 2009). Yet, creative entrepreneurial imagination and the particular processes by which it unfolds remain poorly understood in our field.

The causes of this gap are rooted in both the philosophical assumptions of entrepreneurship scholars and the lack of empirical studies exploring entrepreneurs' creative imaginations. Because creative entrepreneurial imagination, like any kind of “imaginative” phenomena” (p.991) is fundamentally subjective, it is neither directly observable nor easily measurable (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). As such, the objectivist approaches (with their variance-based methods) commonly used in mainstream entrepreneurship studies are ill suited to studying entrepreneurial imagining—a

phenomenon that is essentially subjective and processual (see Chiles, 2003; Scherdin, 2011). Nonetheless, some researchers still frame imagination in variance-based terms; for example, as a cognitive variable (e.g., Grégoire, Corbett, & McMullen, 2011) or to operationalize other variables (e.g., Gielnik, Frese, Graf, & Kampschulte, 2012). Moreover, imagination and its role in the entrepreneurial process have received increasing attention of late; however, scholars who have responded to the above-mentioned calls by Sarasvathy (2001a) and Chiles et al. (2007) to pay closer attention to imagination have done so mostly from a conceptual perspective (e.g., Chiles et al., 2010a; Cornelissen & Clarke, 2010; Klein, 2008; McMullen, 2010). Thus, what our field currently needs is to (1) shift the focus from objectivist and variance-based perspectives to subjectivist and process-based approaches and (2) pursue empirical research that grounds current theoretical understandings in the lived experiences of entrepreneurs. Doing so will help shed light on the understudied topic of entrepreneurial imagining and, particularly, on the specific processes and subprocesses—self-reflective and embodied, conscious and unconscious—by which it unfolds.

With this study I endeavor to shed clearer light on how entrepreneurs generate novelty by engaging their creative imaginations. To that end, I both theoretically developed and empirically grounded a process model of creative entrepreneurial imagination. Specifically, I started by developing a preliminary process model by synthesizing and integrating insights from a set of readings addressing the topic of imagination from various disciplines. I, then, grounded and further honed this model by conducting a 25-month-long case study of a nonprofit venture operating within the music industry. The result is a dynamic, nonlinear process model of creative entrepreneurial

imagination yielding five elements—*experiencing, early creating, reaching an impasse and gestating, (re)creating and evaluating imagined futures, and choosing and enterprising*. Given the complexity and messiness inherent to the process, I use the children’s game of hopscotch as a metaphor to illustrate how creative entrepreneurial imagination unfolds. Throughout this processual exploration of imagination, my philosophical position was ontologically relativist and epistemologically interpretivist.

This paper is formatted as follows: First, I set the stage by discussing imagination and the creative entrepreneurial process. Next, I state the research questions guiding this study, as well as the research approach used to answer these questions. Then, I propose a hopscotch process model of creative entrepreneurial imagination yielding five elements, which I flesh out using the lived experiences of a team of arts entrepreneurs with a particular entrepreneurial project. To conclude the paper, I articulate implications of the proposed process model, as well as some of its limitations and corresponding directions for future research. This paper is unique in that, in addition to illuminating the specific processes—self-reflective and embodied, conscious and unconscious—through which entrepreneurs imagine and generate novelty, it provides scholars with a basis for further exploring the understudied topic of creative entrepreneurial imagination.

### **Imagining and the Creative Entrepreneurial Process**

Imagining is a creative and generative activity of the mind that everyone possesses, even if they are not conscious of it (Jung, 1997). And because there are no boundaries to one’s inner world, imagination is an unlimited process (Dyer, 2012). Imagining is also a “ubiquitous and central feature of mental life” (p.163) that plays an important role in other such mental processes as perceiving, dreaming, believing, giving

meaning, and, most importantly for this paper, creating (McGinn, 2004). Without imagination one would not be able to envision either possible futures or the courses of action needed to attain them (McGinn, 2004; Shackle, 1979). Thus, imagination is at the root of human freedom: Individuals are free to imagine alternatives to their current state (McGinn, 2004), as well as to originate unexpected change (Shackle, 1979). Although anyone has the ability to imagine novelty, individuals become entrepreneurial when they act on their imagined ideas by choosing to pursue—and thus create—a particular imagined future, which ultimately drives the market process (Davidsson, 2004).

By choosing to pursue imagined futures that make a difference to a particular state of affairs, entrepreneurs wind up introducing novelty into their surrounding world. Shackle (1979) explained choice as the locus of *ex nihilo* creation, as an “uncaused cause,” or as the origin of a new beginning that does not flow from a deterministic chain of causality. The word “uncaused” here refers to the freedom of choice to pursue any imagined future (a freedom that is, however, informed by one’s own perceptions, thoughts, and imagination); the word “cause” means that choice is followed by a sequel, an effect, and that it makes a difference (Shackle, 1979). Because choice (of which imagined future to pursue) is based on the choosing entrepreneur’s unique past and perception of the present, Shackle (1979) refers to choice as the source of partly (and thus not wholly) *ex nihilo* creation. Such originative choice is the opposite of responsive choice, which Shackle (1979) describes as “subservient, automatic and empty” (p.32). Thus, in this paper I endeavor to explore how entrepreneurs choose to pursue their own desired imagined future, not how they recognize and passively react to objective opportunities that exist independently of them (Chiles et al., 2010b; Shackle, 1979).

This freedom to actively originate new beginnings makes the entrepreneur a “continuous originator of history”(p.8)—someone who makes a difference in the world by choosing to act on it (Shackle, 1979; also see Chiles et al., 2010b). Like other concepts discussed in this paper, choice is influenced by one’s unique past, which makes choice unforeknowable and its effects uncertain (Shackle, 1979). Adding to this uncertainty is the fact that markets are composed of many entrepreneurs, all of whom create new history, at each moment, as they exercise choice (Shackle, 1979). Thus, the sequels to entrepreneurs’ choices, as well as choice itself, are bounded by the circumstances in which they take place; for example, by the anticipated actions of other entrepreneurs (as imagined by the choosing entrepreneur), the actions actually taken by those other entrepreneurs, and the interactions among all acting individuals (Shackle, 1979). This notion has been explored by proponents of radical subjectivism (a perspective from the Austrian school of economics rooted in the writings of Lachmann and Shackle), who argue that creative entrepreneurial processes take place within “systems of actors, especially open systems comprising numerous, diverse, and interdependent actors” (Chiles et al., 2013, p.23; Lachmann, 1986; Shackle, 1972). In this view, the actions and interactions of individual entrepreneurs influence—and are influenced by—higher-level processes (e.g., the organizational and market levels), thus making creative entrepreneurial imagination an essentially multilevel phenomenon.

In this paper, I outline a multilevel approach to entrepreneurial imagining that contrasts with much of the extant literature on creative entrepreneurial processes, particularly, the stream that eschews the partly *ex nihilo* creation of new ideas in favor of the “perspective that creative solutions are built from the recombination of existing ideas”

(Hargadon & Bechky, 2006, p.485; also see Amabile, 1988; Hargadon & Sutton, 1997).

More specifically, I take a processual and constructivist perspective that is consistent with that of radical subjectivists, who view the world as created (and continually recreated) through entrepreneurs' subjective forward-looking imaginations and, as a result, embrace partly *ex nihilo* creation (Chiles et al., 2010b). Moreover, with my processual approach, I follow Langley and Tsoukas (2010) in emphasizing "the importance of the particular, the local, and the timely," while being "sensitive to context, interactivity, experience, and time," and acknowledging "nonlinearity, emergence, and recursivity" (pp.5-6). The result is an exploration of creative imagination, depicted by means of a dynamic and nonlinear process model, as an essentially processual and multilevel phenomenon with a central focus on the individual—an approach that Langley, Smallman, Tsoukas, and Van de Ven (2013) have highlighted as currently needed in organization studies. Next, I further set the stage for the proposed process model by discussing imagination as a unique, or *sui generis*, phenomenon.

### **Imagination as a *Sui Generis* Phenomenon**

Organizational entrepreneurship scholars have paid considerable attention to entrepreneurial cognition (e.g., Grégoire et al., 2011) and entrepreneurial perception (e.g., Kor et al., 2007)—two *sui generis* phenomena (i.e., two phenomena of their own kind). However, entrepreneurial imagination, which is also a *sui generis* phenomenon, has received relatively little attention. Within the discipline of philosophy, there have been substantial writings on the distinction between imagination and perception (e.g., McGinn, 2004); and although much less has been written on the difference between imagination and cognition, there are enough suggestions that these are also distinct phenomena (see

McGinn, 2004). But even though they are distinct, the processes of imagination, perception, and cognition are interrelated—a connection that will, I believe, become clear as I discuss each element of the proposed process model.

Many philosophers have expressed their thoughts and opinions on the topic of imagination as a process that differs from perception. For example, Wittgenstein (1967, §637) views imagining as different from perceiving, particularly in terms of volition: “The concept of imagining is rather like one of doing than receiving. Imagining might be called a creative act. (And is of course so called)” (p.111). Thus, while imagining involves visualizing (which requires one’s will and effort to engage in this mental act), perceiving involves seeing (which does not require a mental effort). In a similar vein, Sartre (1948/1978) explains that while perception entails “a passivity of consciousness,” the image is “the product of a conscious activity, is shot through and through with a flow of creative will” (p.20). Moreover, McGinn (2004) argues that imagining is distinct from perceiving in several other aspects. For instance, he suggests that perceiving involves seeing an object through the body’s eye; so, if the object is not present, it cannot be perceived. Imagining, on the other hand, involves visualizing an object using the mind’s eye; thus, the object’s actual presence is not required. As a result, while imagining involves a mental act of creation (of the object in one’s mind), perceiving entails an act of recognition (of the object before us). Additionally, McGinn (2004) explains that when seeing through the body’s eye, there are many boundaries to the visual field (e.g., periphery, blind spots, interruption of light due to blinking); but no such boundaries apply when visualizing with the mind’s eye. Thus, imagination is distinct from perception.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> For a more thorough explanation of the aspects in which imagination and perception differ, see McGinn (2004).

In addition to perception, imagination is also distinct from cognition: An image (i.e., the product of imagination) is neither a kind of percept (i.e., the object of perception) nor a type of thought (i.e., the basis for cognition) (McGinn, 2004). Although certain aspects of thoughts and images are remarkably similar (e.g., being subject to one's will, not requiring the object's presence, being dependent on one's attention), cognition and imagination can occur without each other (McGinn, 2004). For instance, I can visualize a person with my mind's eye without thinking through that person's descriptive attributes. Similarly, I can entertain various descriptive thoughts about a person without ever visualizing that same person. Thus, imagination and cognition cannot be reduced to one another; that is, they are two phenomena of their own kind (McGinn, 2004). In sum, imagining, perceiving, and thinking are three *sui generis* processes. This is not to say, however, that they are mutually exclusive. In fact, they intertwine to inform one another, particularly as entrepreneurs engage their creative imaginations to generate novel ideas and products. In the next sections, I state the research questions guiding this study and, then, I describe the research approach used to answer such questions.

### **Research Questions**

The central research question underlying this paper is: Given their past experience, how do entrepreneurs imagine novel ideas and products, generate novelty, and make a difference in the future? Specifically, this study comprised two parts. In the first part, I theoretically developed a preliminary process model of creative entrepreneurial imagination. In the second part, I empirically grounded—and further honed—the theoretical concepts embodied in the preliminary process model. The two sub-questions guiding this study's theoretical and empirical components are, respectively:

(1) What are the conceptual ideas embodied in the process of creative entrepreneurial imagination, and (2) Do these ideas have any grounding in the lived experiences of entrepreneurs?

### **Research Approach**

The purpose of this study is to understand the processes through which entrepreneurs generate novelty by engaging their creative imaginations. To that end, and in order to address the research questions guiding this study, I conducted a study comprising two parts. For the first part, I reviewed a set of readings addressing the topic of imagination from various disciplinary perspectives. This allowed me to develop a process model of creative entrepreneurial imagination that sheds theoretical light on how entrepreneurs create novel ideas and products. For the second part, I conducted a 25-month-long case study to empirically ground and further hone, in the lived experiences of a team of arts entrepreneurs, the theoretical concepts embodied in the preliminary process model. This research design is appropriate because I seek an in-depth understanding of a process—that of creative entrepreneurial imagining—and of how it unfolds over time by focusing on a single case and by using multiple sources of empirical material (Creswell, 2007). Moreover, qualitative analysis is particularly useful for understanding dynamic processes (Lee, Mitchell, & Sablinski, 1999), especially when these involve subjective processes that unfold, for the most part, in entrepreneurs' minds and accessing them requires taking an intersubjective approach to inquiry (Chiles et al., 2013).

### **Research Setting and Data Collection**

After theoretically developing a process model of creative entrepreneurial imagination, I engaged in field research as a means to ground—and further hone—the

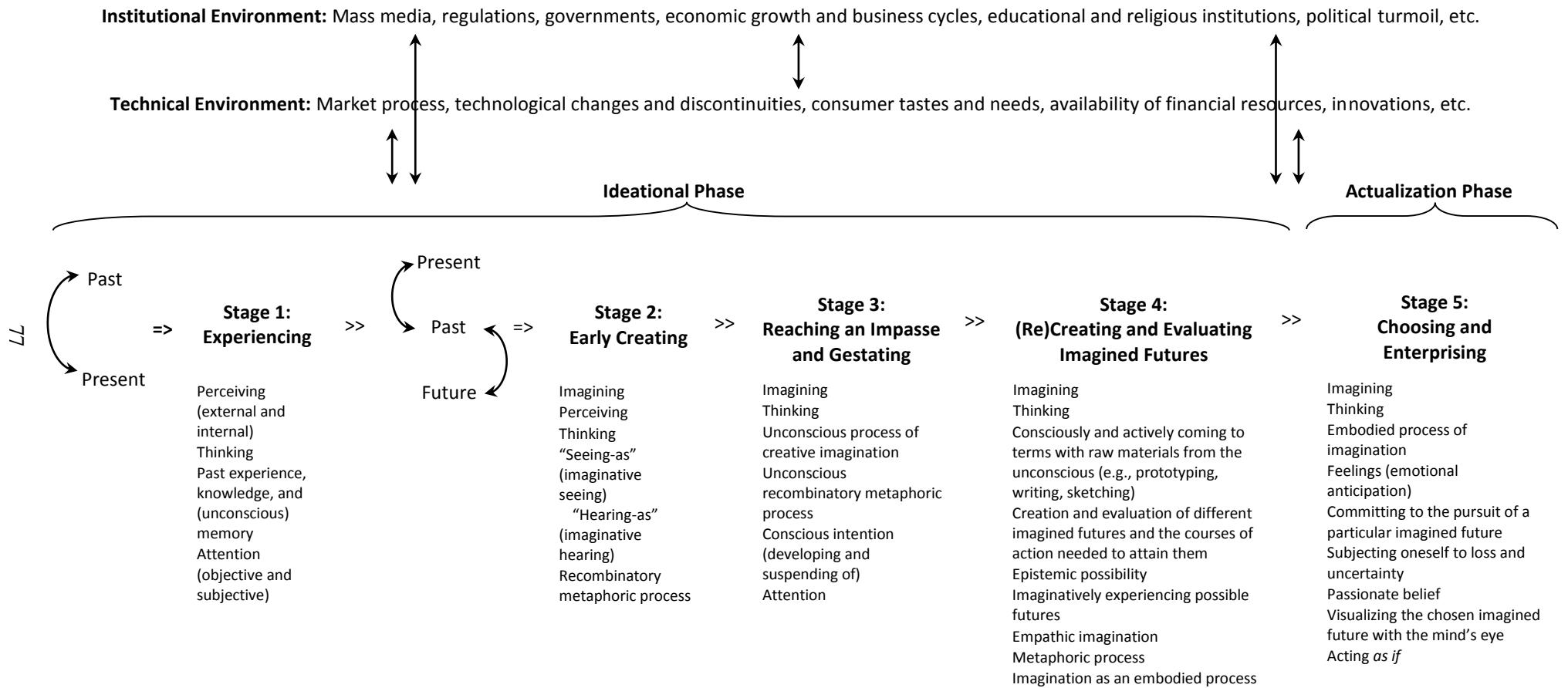
theoretical ideas embodied in the preliminary model. To do so, I sought a more thorough understanding of a particular case (Stake, 1995). Specifically, the case in this study is a single organization: CICO – International Center for the Carillon and the Organ, which is a nonprofit venture within the music industry, comprising three Portuguese entrepreneurs. It is important to disclose that I am one of these entrepreneurs; the other two are my sister Ana Elias and my father Alberto Elias, with whom I co-founded this organization and who are the focal research participants in this study. I purposefully decided to study my own family business's involvement with one entrepreneurial project because my goal was to gain an in-depth understanding of a highly subjective process that is neither directly observable nor easily verbalized. Experiencing creative entrepreneurial imagining for myself was essential in better understanding this process as the two focal entrepreneurs in this study attempted to describe it to me. By fully immersing myself in the phenomena I sought to study, I followed Johannisson (2011) who proposes enactive research as an interactive methodology that allows researchers to holistically engage in research and, as a result, to gain unique insight into the entrepreneurship process.

Furthermore, I decided to focus on the music industry because research in arts entrepreneurship allows scholars to spotlight entrepreneurial dreams (Rindova, Barry, & Ketchen, 2009) and creative imagination (Bonnafous-Boucher, Cuir, & Partouche, 2011) as critical to the entrepreneurial process. By exploring such processes, I am thus answering Sarasvathy's (2001a) and Chiles et al.'s (2007) call for organizational entrepreneurship scholars to pay closer attention to the role of imagination in the entrepreneurial process. By following, participating in, and analyzing the lived experiences of this team of entrepreneurs—a process that includes witnessing the

unfolding of particular events in real-time—I was able to ground and further hone the preliminary process model of creative entrepreneurial imagination developed in the first part of this study. As such, I used this team of entrepreneurs as an instrumental case study (Stake, 1995) that focused on the uniqueness of one entrepreneurial organization and the lived experiences of its three founding members. However, as is typical with instrumental case studies, the goal of the study was to reach an in-depth understanding of something more general than the case itself (Stake, 1995); that is, of the processes by which creative entrepreneurial imagination generally unfolds.

The primary methods of data collection were books, interviews, participant observation, spect-acting, and secondary sources. In the first part of the study, I reviewed both canonical (Arnheim, 1969/2004; Jung (Chodorow, 1997); Sartre, 1948/1978; Shackle, 1979) and more recent (Dyer, 2012; McGinn, 2004; Modell, 2003) books addressing the topic of imagination from various disciplinary perspectives: Art/design, cognitive psychology, economics, evolutionary biology, linguistics, neurobiology, neuroscience, philosophy (including philosophy of language and philosophy of the mind), psychoanalysis, and spirituality. Then, I synthesized and integrated insights from these readings to develop a preliminary process model of creative entrepreneurial imagination. Given its focus on entrepreneurial imagination, Shackle's (1979) radically subjective exploration of the topic served as the process model's foundation, to which I added insights from the other disciplinary perspectives. Ultimately, this yielded a preliminary five-stage process model of creative entrepreneurial imagination—*experiencing, early creating, reaching an impasse and gestating, (re)creating and evaluating imagined futures, and choosing and enterprising* (see Figure 4).

**FIGURE 4**  
**A Preliminary Process Model of Creative Entrepreneurial Imagination (Interview Handout)**



In the second part of the study, the primary sources of empirical material were interviews, participant observation, and spect-acting. At three points in time ( $t_0$ ,  $t_{12}$ ,  $t_{24}$ ), I conducted fieldwork in Portugal for about three weeks. Field research for this study started with a two-phase interview process: First, I asked open-ended questions about the focal entrepreneurs' lived experiences with creating entrepreneurial ventures (focusing on their formation, evolution over time, and dissolution); second, I asked semi-structured questions based on an interview handout similar to the process model developed in the first part of the study (see Figure 4). Specifically, in the first phase of the interview process I engaged in phenomenological interviewing (Cope, 2005)—a type of interviewing in which researchers play a passive role, letting interviewees take the lead in describing their lived experiences. In the second phase, I took a more active role that allowed me to engage in a conversation and, as a result, in a negotiation of meaning relating to the process of creative entrepreneurial imagination (see Chiles et al., 2013). This intersubjective approach—which Kvale & Brinkmann (2009) describe as an “interview” due to the interactive exchange of views between interviewer and interviewee—allowed us to co-interpret and co-construct an in-depth understanding of the processes by which entrepreneurs engage their creative imaginations. Because I wanted to ground the process model in as many entrepreneurial projects in which this organization had been involved as possible, this two-phase interview process was spread over two weeks. During this period, I also engaged in participant observation and spect-acting, as I helped with resolving administrative issues, attended meetings with potential sponsors, and aided in rehearsals of future music performances. While doing so, I also conversed with my focal entrepreneurs, asking them to narrate aloud what was going on inside their minds

(Lubart, 2001), focusing on the specific processes—perceptual, cognitive, and imaginative—underlying their entrepreneurial actions.

This two-phase interview process, which took place in mid-2013, was very helpful in providing my entrepreneurs with a nuanced understanding of the purpose of my study. It also helped me realize that (1) one of CICO's projects—the acquisition of a traveling carillon,<sup>7</sup> the LVSITANVS Carillon—was unfolding between stages four and five of the preliminary process model, and (2) following this project to completion would be extremely beneficial in further grounding the process model. After talking with the focal research participants, we agreed that I would accompany the evolution of this project for, at least, a few more months by holding Skype meetings once—sometimes twice—a week. My thinking was that, by doing so, I would be able to capture the real-time process dynamics (as opposed to the retrospective reconstructions) that this organization was experiencing (Lichtenstein, 2000) as its founders endeavored to both complete this project and start new ones. Given the difficult economic situation in Portugal at the time, none of us seemed to be too optimistic about actually acquiring a traveling carillon before it was time for me to finalize my field research. However, in early 2014, we received a €200,000 grant from the European Network for Rural Development, allowing this project's completion date to be expedited to December 2014. To take advantage of this unexpected opportunity, I continued my research until mid-2015 (the inauguration festivities took place in May 2015), bringing this study to 25

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<sup>7</sup> A carillon is a musical instrument, typically located inside a bell tower, comprising at least 23 cast bronze bells, tuned and mechanically activated by striking the keys in a manualboard and the pedals in a pedalboard. A traveling carillon is particularly interesting in that it is located at ground level, making it easy to be transported with a truck to play outdoors and, in some cases, indoors. As such, a traveling carillon makes it easier to perform carillon concerts with other artists or groups of artists (e.g., dancers, poets, singers, music ensembles, orchestras).

months of data collection, which was essential in collecting enough empirical material to ground all elements of the proposed process model. Although there are two focal research participants in this study, I also collected accounts from a variety of individuals connected to this organization, including public officials, accountants and financial advisors, community members, students, artists, and sponsors. These accounts were key in providing a contextualized understanding of CICO's entrepreneurial efforts.

Lastly, interviews, which were both audio- and video-taped, were transcribed and analyzed along with fieldnotes and secondary data. Secondary data include such documentary sources as books, newspapers, magazines, television and video transcripts, websites, and photographs. Overall, data were collected in both Portuguese and in English and, in an attempt to keep as close to the intended meaning of the empirical material as possible, I followed Svejenova, Mazza, and Planellas (2007) in working with the collected data in their original language, thus only translating "into English relevant quotes and insights" (p.542). Because I am fluent in both languages, there was no need to outsource the translating of data to an outside party. However, because one of the focal research participants—Ana Elias—is also fluent in both languages, she kindly double-checked all translated quotes to make sure that meaning was not lost in translation; her help was indispensable. The next section provides a more thorough explanation of the data analysis process.

## **Data Analysis**

In this study, I took an abductive approach rooted in an understanding of doubt, surprise, and reflexivity as critical to the research process. This approach allowed me to iteratively incorporate the conceptual ideas embodied in the preliminary process model

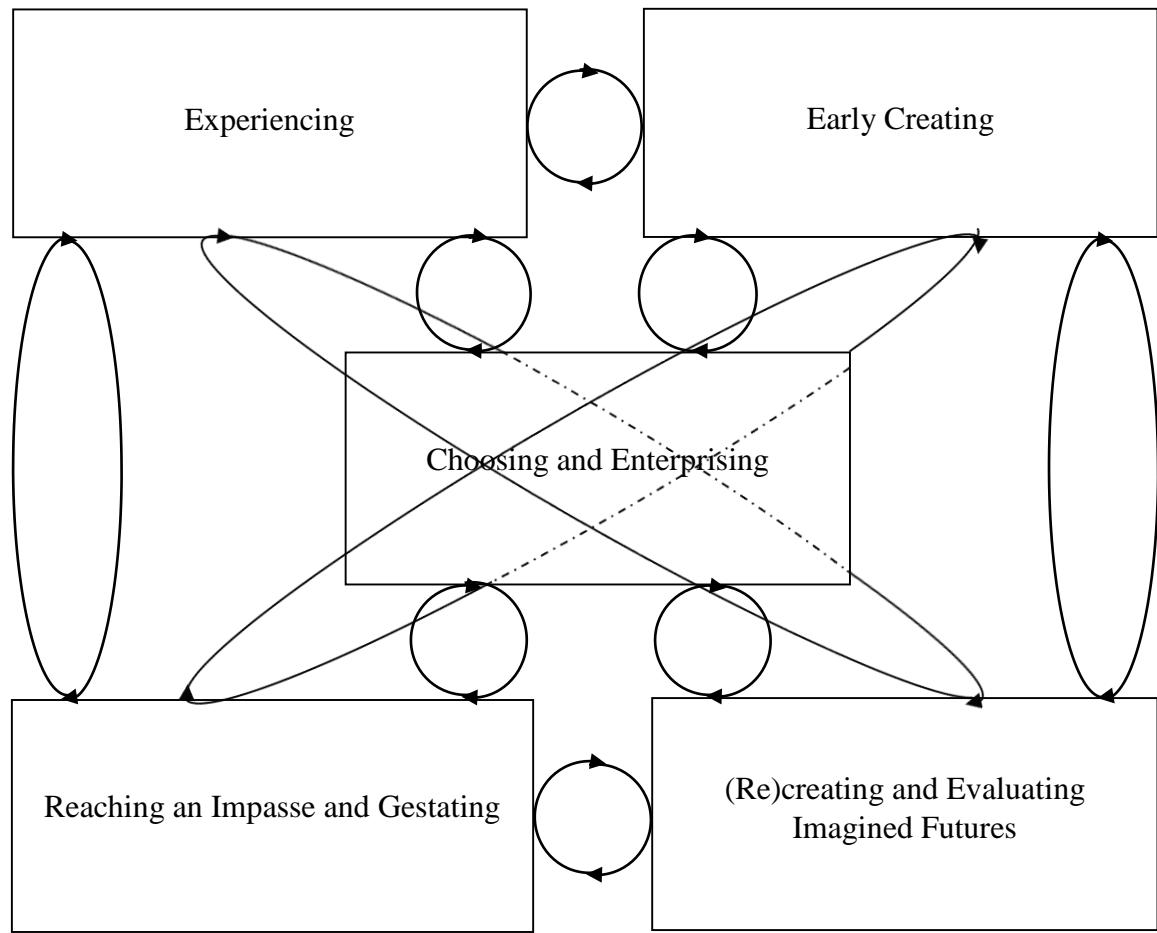
(developed during the first part of the study) with the themes emerging from my empirical materials (collected during the second part of the study) to propose a hopscotch process model of creative entrepreneurial imagination. Empirical materials included transcribed interviews, fieldnotes, and secondary sources of data, which I analyzed by means of a thematic analysis technique that allowed me to identify key themes based on their recurrence, repetition, and forcefulness (Owen, 1984). This study's research questions, as well as the particular theoretical concepts embodied in the preliminary process model, were key in guiding the analysis, but without blinding the emergence of themes from the data. Overall, because I pursued an instrumental case study (Stake, 1995) with the goal of reaching an in-depth understanding of something more general than the case itself—that is, of the processes by which creative entrepreneurial imagination generally unfolds—I sought “analytic generalizability” of the empirical material to general theoretical understandings, as opposed to “statistical generalizability” to broader populations (Yin, 1994, p.10).

Given my intersubjective approach to grounding the process model, the data collection and data analysis stages of the research process unfolded concurrently. This was extremely fruitful in further developing the preliminary process model with focal research participants; however, it is important to note that reaching intersubjective understanding with them required me to engage in reflexivity throughout these overlapping stages of research. Specifically, I questioned my own taken-for-granted assumptions, as well as how these were influencing the research process (Gill, 2011), so that I could uncover and consider interpretations other than my own (Cunliffe, 2002b; Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). As such, I had to consider both myself and the participants

in the study as knowledgeable, “embodied insiders” (Cunliffe, 2011, p.665) who could collectively construct the meaning of the process of creative entrepreneurial imagination.

As an example, my focal research participants called my attention to the need to better represent the dynamism, nonlinearity, and inherent messiness of the process of creative imagining. In their opinion (and I eventually agreed), the preliminary process model (Figure 4) depicted creative entrepreneurial imagination too neatly and linearly; yet, at the same time, it was a confusing model, not easily digestible due to information overload. Their comments took me by surprise; however, upon reflexive thought, I realized that their feedback was fundamental to further develop the process model. In an attempt to incorporate participants’ insights, and to more truthfully and clearly depict creative entrepreneurial imagination, I decided to use the children’s game of hopscotch as a metaphor to illustrate the processes and subprocesses by which imagination unfolds. We all agreed that this was a much better way to represent the phenomena at hand. The result is the process model depicted in Figure 5, which I explain more thoroughly in the next section.

**FIGURE 5**  
**A Hopscotch Process Model of Creative Entrepreneurial Imagination**



#### Key Conceptual Ideas Embodied in the Hopscotch Process Model's Five Elements:

Experiencing	Early Creating	Reaching an Impasse and Gestating	(Re)creating and Evaluating Imagined Futures	Choosing and Enterprising
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Perceiving (external and internal)</li> <li>- Thinking</li> <li>- Past experience, knowledge, and (unconscious) memory</li> <li>- Attention (objective and subjective)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Imagining</li> <li>- Perceiving</li> <li>- Thinking</li> <li>- “Seeing-as” (imaginative seeing)</li> <li>- “Hearing-as” (imaginative hearing)</li> <li>- Recombinatory metaphoric process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Imagining</li> <li>- Thinking</li> <li>- Unconscious process of creative imagination</li> <li>- Unconscious recombinatory metaphoric process</li> <li>- Conscious intention (developing and suspending of)</li> <li>- Attention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Imagining</li> <li>- Thinking</li> <li>- Consciously and actively coming to terms with raw materials from the unconscious (e.g., prototyping, writing, sketching)</li> <li>- Creation and evaluation of different imagined futures and the courses of action needed to attain them</li> <li>- Epistemic possibility</li> <li>- Imaginatively experiencing possible futures</li> <li>- Empathic imagination</li> <li>- Metaphoric process</li> <li>- Imagination as an embodied process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Imagining</li> <li>- Thinking</li> <li>- Embodied process of imagination</li> <li>- Feelings (emotional anticipation)</li> <li>- Committing to the pursuit of a particular imagined future</li> <li>- Subjecting oneself to loss and uncertainty</li> <li>- Passionate belief</li> <li>- Visualizing the chosen imagined future with the mind’s eye</li> <li>- Acting as if</li> </ul>

## **Creative Imagination: A Hopscotch Process Model for Entrepreneurship**

The hopscotch process model of creative entrepreneurial imagination in Figure 5 is grounded in the Bergsonian notion of “time as a non-mechanistic source of creative change” (Vaughan, 2007, p.10). The reason for using the children’s game of hopscotch as a metaphor is that, as my research participants stressed many times over, imagination should not be portrayed through a deterministic chain of causality rooted in objective time (i.e., the notion that time, existing independently of one’s consciousness, can be linearly and mechanistically measured). This was one key problem with the preliminary process model developed during the first part of this study (Figure 4). Rather, the proposed hopscotch process model is a better representation of a phenomenon that is based on an understanding of time as subjective (Bluedorn, 2002)—a perspective in which time periods are never interpreted or experienced in exactly the same way, “whether by two different people or by the same person in different circumstances” (Chiles et al., 2007, p.483). In this non-deterministic view, the past and the future are not assumed to be calculable functions of the present, and time is viewed as a continuous, non-repetitive, and non-quantifiable flow (Bergson, 1911). This approach is appropriate to study creative entrepreneurial imagination because the purpose of imagination is “to transcend the present,” both “temporally and spatially” (McGinn, 2004, p.153). Also, taking a non-deterministic approach is important because it allows for viewing individuals as fundamentally free to act in surprising and unpredictable ways—a freedom that is essential to the creative process (McGinn, 2004; Shackle, 1979).

The hopscotch metaphor is also useful in depicting creative entrepreneurial imagination as an overall dynamic, complex, and nonlinear process. As a children’s

game, hopscotch can be played alone or with several players. As players hop through the game, they do not need to step on every space sequentially and they can even bypass certain spaces. They can also move freely, both forwards and backwards, and they can step on two spaces at once. This process is similar to that by which entrepreneurs engage their creative imaginations. That is, as entrepreneurs transition from one element of the hopscotch process model to the next, they do so in a manner that is not automatic or rigid (McGinn, 2004). As such, the temporal ordering of the various elements is flexible, with some potentially occurring simultaneously or in a dynamic, cyclical, and recursive manner (Lubart, 2001). Also, the duration of each element is variable, ranging from only a fleeting moment to an extended period of time. And because the proposed process model is intended to represent creative entrepreneurial imagination comprehensively, entrepreneurs may even bypass some of its elements as they imagine new futures. As a result, the process of creatively imagining novelty is unique to each entrepreneur and the context in which (s)he is embedded. In the following paragraphs, I explain each of the five elements in the hopscotch process model. Although I do so in an orderly fashion for the sake of theoretical and empirical clarity, it is important to re-emphasize that creative entrepreneurial imagination is a nonlinear, dynamic, and quite complex process.

### **Experiencing**

Creative entrepreneurial imagination is rooted in each individual entrepreneur's unique past and experience of the present. In this element, individuals experience their surrounding world untainted by imagination (McGinn, 2004)—that is, without actually imagining into the future. As such, the *experiencing* element strictly involves the *sui generis* processes of perceiving and thinking, which are both facilitated by past

experience, knowledge, and memory, as well as attention. Although often separated in theory (as a way of reaching theoretical understanding), in practice the processes of perceiving and thinking intertwine. As a result, there is a continual interaction between the gathering of information and the processing of it (Arnheim, 1969/2004). For instance, as entrepreneurs perceive their surrounding world—which includes their institutional (e.g., mass media, regulations, governments, economic growth and business cycles, educational and religious institutions, political turmoil) and technical environments (e.g., market process, technological changes and discontinuities, consumer tastes and needs, availability of financial resources, innovations) (Scott, 1992)—they are also thinking: Their thoughts influence what they see, and what they see also influences their thoughts. This interconnection between perception and thought allows entrepreneurs to interpret impressions from their surrounding world, resulting in what Shackle (1979) terms “reports from the field.” But entrepreneurs do not perceive the external world [*external perceiving*] only; they also gather information from inside their own bodies [*internal perceiving*] (Modell, 2003). As such, they become aware of their affective reactions, or feelings, toward the surrounding world, in turn projecting a particular meaning onto what they perceive (Sartre, 1948/1978). By perceiving the outer world and affectively reacting to it, entrepreneurs give meaning to their surroundings—an essential part of the process of creatively imagining possible futures.

For example, the idea for the LVSITANVS Carillon, as Ana explained it, first developed in “Alberto’s mind in 1998 when we all saw a traveling carillon for the first time in Belgium and [Ana and Sara] both performed for the first time in this instrument” [*external perceiving*]. (For a diagram of the structure of the LVSITANVS Carillon at

different stages of development, and a picture of the actual carillon, see Figure 6.) As Ana further elucidated,

We interacted with the traveling carillon and we saw the possibilities of such instrument [*external perceiving*]—getting the carillon to the people instead of getting the people to the carillon, which is something that people don't know [in Portugal]. You don't know, you don't go. ... So then you immediately start thinking how you can get one of these “toys” in Portugal<sup>8</sup> [*thinking*]. ... I am very passionate about the carillon—it is the only instrument that I could have always seen myself playing professionally—so this idea eventually became very exciting [*internal perceiving*]!

When explaining the source of this idea, Alberto explained that his experiencing of a traveling carillon in Belgium allowed him to think of ways to pursue an untapped opportunity in Portugal:

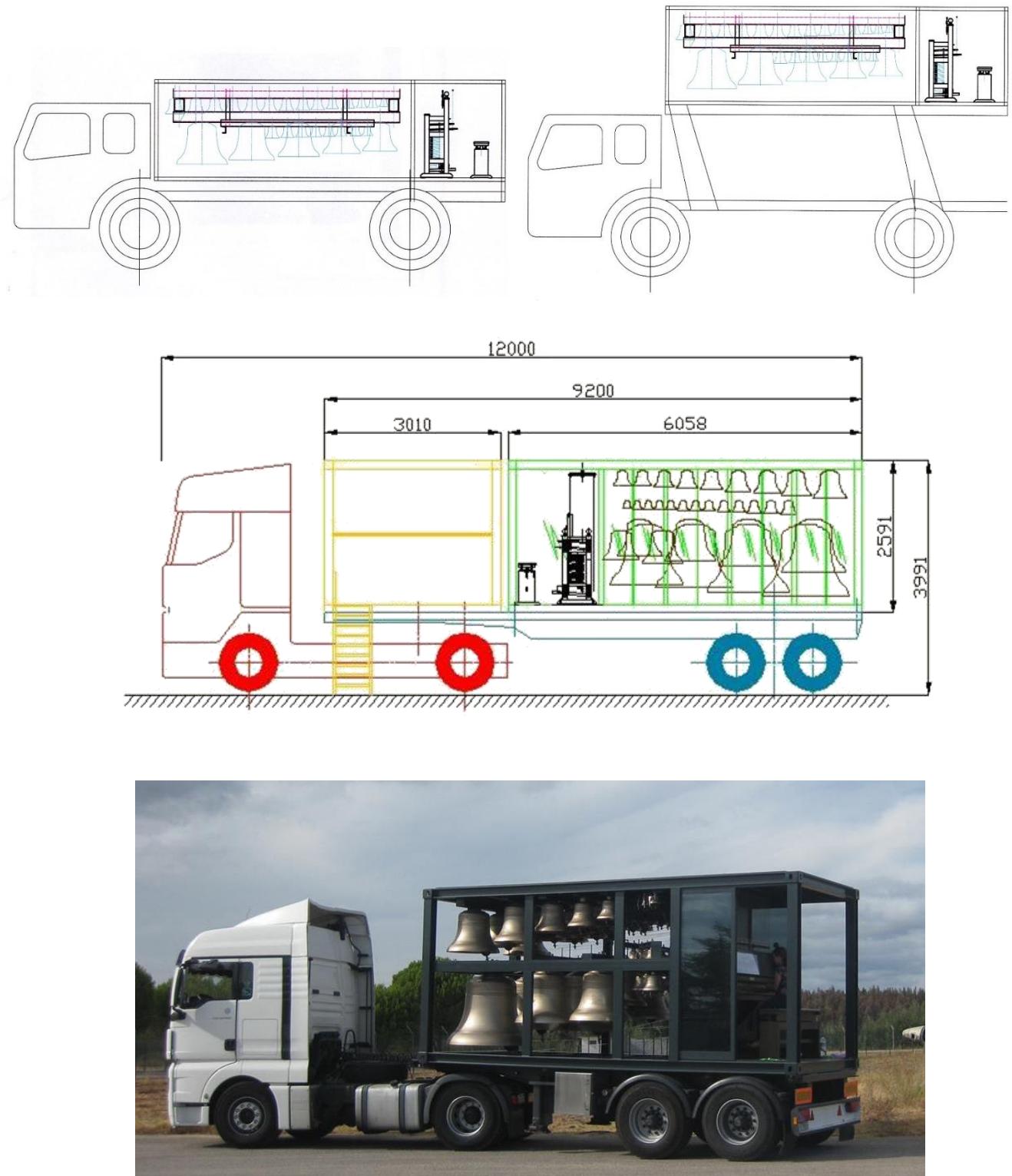
I thought that the traveling carillon presented a solution to the problem [*thinking*] of people [in Portugal] not knowing what a carillon is [*external perceiving*]. And I felt that there was a need to introduce our country to a new attitude toward music that otherwise people would not hear about; this was an opportunity that I thought we should pursue [*external perceiving*]. ... So when I first saw [the traveling carillon] I was happy, not surprised, but I enjoyed having this idea [*internal perceiving*], although I also knew from the get go that it was going to be difficult because if something doesn't exist yet [in Portugal], then nobody pays attention, but I thought there was a need to make people start thinking about it [*thinking*].

In short, these quotes illustrates how, as part of *experiencing*, (1) the process of gathering information from our surrounding environment [*external perceiving*] triggered our thinking (which resulted in thoughts that both informed and were informed by our perceptions), and (2) both our passion for the carillon and our affective reaction [*internal perceiving*] to the received “reports from the field” [*external perceiving*] prompted us to consider [*thinking*] pursuing what many of our friends describe as a very unusual line of work.

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<sup>8</sup> Working on this project ultimately entailed acquiring what is still today the only traveling carillon in Portugal, as well as the largest (63 bells) and heaviest (7 tons of bronze) traveling carillon in the world.

**FIGURE 6**  
**Diagrams of the LVSITANVS Carillon in both its Original Version (First Row) and Revised Version (Second Row) and Picture of the Actual Carillon (Third Row)**



Individuals experience their surrounding world in the present, while continually storing in their minds many percepts and thoughts that eventually become part of their past experience, knowledge, and memory. In turn, this continually changing past eventually influences how individuals (1) select, interpret, and supplement perceptions in the present (Arnheim, 1969/2004; Kor et al., 2007), and (2) formulate thoughts regarding such perceptions. Specifically, as percepts and thoughts are stored in the mind, they become unconscious memory waiting to be selectively activated. Thus, as entrepreneurs experience the world, through perception and thought, they recover and recontextualize specific memories—a key process in allowing them to recognize novelty as they start noticing similarities and differences among perceptions, both external and internal (Modell, 2003).

For example, although the idea for a traveling carillon first came to Alberto's mind in 1998, it eventually went dormant because we got involved with other carillon-related projects. However, as Ana explained it,

About six years later, [Alberto] found a call for proposals for innovative ideas developed by young Portuguese minds [*external perceiving*] and “Pling!” the idea came back to his mind [selectively activating *unconscious memory*]. … And when he showed us the call, the experience and knowledge I had about traveling carillons were immediately triggered [activating *past experience, knowledge, and memory*].

Although this call for proposals broached the disciplines of design, multimedia, and music, as soon as we read “innovative projects in Portugal,” we immediately thought “traveling carillon” because that was our past experience and background. Had our backgrounds been in a different area of expertise, we might have come up with different thoughts or, perhaps, have noticed a different “report from the field.” At the time we read the call for proposals [*external perceiving*], we had been involved in promoting the

carillon art for many years, but only in regards to traditional carillons—those hanging inside bell towers. Thus, when we learned of the call for proposals (through perception), we thought of it as an opportunity to do something novel (i.e., to acquire a traveling carillon), yet, within our field of expertise (which entailed a combination of knowledge in carillon art and engineering). As we discussed and thought further about it, we recovered and recontextualized specific memories relating to carillon mechanics, performance, and ergonomics. For instance, we discussed that (1) the largest (59 bells) and heaviest (11 tons of bronze) traveling carillon in the world at the time, although certainly impressive, it was also so loud at ground level that it had to be placed extremely far away from the public and from any walls that might reflect its sound, (2) some traditional carillons were particularly difficult for both women and youngsters to play—the mechanical system connecting the keyboard to the bells' clappers were, in our view, outdated, making the carillon unnecessarily heavy; and (3) different carillons, following either the American or the European keyboard standards, placed different physical strains on the carillonist, resulting in pain, exhaustion, bruising, and even bleeding fingers during long concerts. Ultimately, when combined with both thinking and perceiving, the process of recovering and recontextualizing specific carillon- and engineering-related memories and knowledge allowed us to recognize what would be novel approaches to the construction of a traveling carillon.

Attention plays a key role throughout the process of creative entrepreneurial imagination. In the *experiencing* element, while facilitating both perceiving and thinking, attention is particularly important because without it experience would be utter chaos (James, 1890). That is, attention allows one's mind to focus selectively on what is

relevant while avoiding information overload (Arnheim, 1969/2004). In particular, Dyer (2012) distinguishes between two types of attention—objective (focusing on external information) and subjective (monitoring internal impressions). He argues that individuals should focus first on the latter (to facilitate both internal perceiving and thinking), so that they can ignore external impressions [*external perceiving*] that contradict their thoughts and desires (Dyer, 2012). Keeping “attention subjectively focused” (Dyer, 2012, p.125) allows entrepreneurs to be the major influence on their own thoughts, perceptions, and—ultimately—imagined futures.

For example, during our interviews, both Ana and Alberto reminded me that we often receive a variety of feedback when we tell people about our intentions to get involved in the acquisition of a new carillon (be it a traditional or a traveling one). While some react to our ideas with positive comments and encouragement, many others react less favorably, saying, for example, “What?? Are you crazy?!” “But where will you find the money to buy such a pricy instrument?” and “Yes, this is a great idea, but I doubt it that it will ever actually come true.” Retrospectively, we did exactly as Dyer (2012) suggests: We purposefully disregarded negative external impressions [*external perceiving*]—unless they were in any way constructive to our efforts—instead keeping our “attention subjectively focused” (p.125) (to facilitate both internal perceiving and thinking). Ana, for instance, explained how she deals with negative criticism: “When people say that I’m talking crazy [about carillons], I smile and don’t let it affect me [keeping *attention subjectively focused*]; instead, I try to think of ways to flip their perspective.” Although this is sometimes difficult to do, I believe that attending primarily

to our subjective impressions and thoughts has been key in successfully accomplishing all the carillon projects in which we have been involved.

In sum, the *experiencing* element involves perceiving and thinking—two *sui generis* processes that are facilitated by past experience, knowledge, and memory, as well as attention. Given the interplay between individuals' unique past and their perceptions and thoughts in the present, Arnheim (1969/2004) suggests that the past is *in* the present. This notion is suitable to this first element, in which entrepreneurs experience the world untainted by imagination. But as entrepreneurs start imagining and creating the future in their minds—a process that unfolds during the remaining elements of the model—their creations are influenced by both their past and present; at that point, arguably, both the past *and* the future are in the present. This view is consistent with Shackle's (1979) contention that “the content of time-to-come is merely a part of the same existent which we cognize in the present, it is essentially one with that present and with all the content of time past” (p.vii). Similarly, Merleau-Ponty (1962) has argued that an “intentional arc” surrounds each individual, projecting his or her past, future, and (present) human setting. This weaving of past, present, and future is particularly important during the remaining elements of the process model of creative entrepreneurial imagination.

### **Early Creating**

As explained above, during the *experiencing* element of the hopscotch process model, entrepreneurs experience and interpret their surrounding and inner worlds in light of their unique past experience, knowledge, and memories; imagination, however, does not necessarily play a role during this element. Entrepreneurs start engaging their creative imaginations only during the *early creating* element, as they begin to imagine novelty

into the future. To do so, they start by “seeing-as” (or, in some cases, “hearing-as”), a process that involves both the interaction of perceiving and imagining—two *sui generis* concepts explained earlier in the paper—and, as a result, a collaboration between the body’s and the mind’s eye (McGinn, 2004). While “seeing-as” (also known as “imaginative seeing”), individuals distort a particular percept by imaginatively placing different interpretations on it (McGinn, 2004). Then, aided by thought, they creatively combine and recombine elements in their minds—elements such as present and past percepts, experiences, and knowledge—linking them together into sequences that result in the crafting of inner stories (McGinn, 2004). This interweaving of perception, thought, and imagination allows entrepreneurs to creatively rearrange the world in their minds and start envisioning different, unseen worlds through a recombinatory process that is facilitated by metaphor (Diamond, 2014; McGinn, 2004; Modell, 2003).

As such, metaphor plays a fundamental role during the *early creating* element—not only does it allow for the transference of insights between different and previously unconnected domains; it also facilitates the transformation of meaning and generation of novel percepts, thoughts, and images (Modell, 2003; Morgan, 2006). Metaphor in this sense is not limited to language; rather, it underlies any recombinatory mental process involving perceiving, thinking, and imagining. During the *early creating* element, while combining and recombining details in their minds, entrepreneurs go through a metaphoric process that involves a bisociative act—a concept essential to the creative process. As Koestler (1964) explains it, “[t]he bisociative act connects previously unconnected matrices of experience; it makes us understand what it is to be awake, to be living on several planes at once” (p.48). This recombinatory metaphoric process is what allows

entrepreneurs to look at a specific product and start *seeing* it in their minds *as* a different product—as an improved product, as the same product serving a new function, or both.

For example, for our traveling carillon project, we originally wanted to create a unique instrument with novel features: (1) A transposition system<sup>9</sup> that would more easily allow the carillon to play with other instruments, and (2) a mechanism that would allow the carillon to be lifted up in the air so that, in the event of a larger crowd, everyone could see the carillonist perform. (For a diagram of this first version of our idea, see the first row of Figure 6). However, we eventually realized that, in order to have a transposition system, we would need a large number of bells, which increased the projected weight of the instrument to a level that would no longer allow it to be lifted. As such, we changed our original plans, deciding to acquire a large and heavy instrument (too heavy to be lifted); yet, we still wanted it to be an aesthetically pleasing instrument, both visually and sonorously. (For a diagram of this version of our idea, see the second row of Figure 6). To do so, we started looking at existing traveling carillons [*external perceiving*], studying and thinking about their structure, and combining and recombining some of their characteristics [*recombinatory metaphoric process*], to eventually start *seeing* them *as* our traveling carillon [*imaginative seeing*]. Ana's account illustrates this process:

You look at one carillon [*external perceiving*] and you see the one mechanism that didn't work. You realize you don't want that [*thinking*], but you grab the image of what worked and put it in a drawer. And the same thing for other carillons and drawers. My brain is like that, it's like drawers in an armoire. I don't know what happens inside when you close the drawers but then these papers with images get mixed up in the drawers and you come up with a new idea [*recombinatory metaphoric process*]. ... You develop a new project and you start

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<sup>9</sup> Transposition systems allow musicians to change the key of an instrument. This mechanical system, as we envisioned it, would be particularly helpful for carillonists to both perform with different transposing instruments and quickly change key mid-concert. For various reasons, the LVSITANVS Carillon does not currently possess this feature. However, we hope to continue developing this idea to potentially add it to the carillon at a later date.

seeing things [*imaginative seeing*]. I cannot do anything without seeing. I always see what I'm doing. If you ask me to draw it, I can't, because there is an image in my mind but it's not a really defined image yet [*imaginative seeing*]. But you start seeing the image [of the traveling carillon] because you saw others that you know, and it's several of them [*recombinatory metaphoric process*]. Then, you start thinking about the details.

Similarly, Alberto faced a recombinatory metaphoric process that, arising from the aesthetic experience of observing a glass building, provided inspiration for the carillon's unique design:

There is no particular reason for designing a traveling carillon that looks like an ice cube, but the idea originated from unintentionally looking at the structure of a glass building [*external perceiving*], I can't remember where, which then made me think that an ice-cube-looking carillon [*recombinatory metaphoric process*] would look great being pulled by a truck [*imaginative seeing*]. There is no particular reason for the idea; it was simply an inspiration that arose in-the-moment, when I looked at something else [*recombinatory metaphoric process*]. I, then, started liking the idea [*internal perceiving*] and that's why the actual traveling carillon resembles, at least somewhat for now, an ice cube.

As these accounts show, both Ana and Alberto experienced a recombinatory metaphoric process while imagining a uniquely looking instrument [*imaginative seeing*]. What is interesting here is that the “unconnected matrices of experience” (Koestler, 1964, p.48) that they retrieved—and subsequently combined and recontextualized in their minds to imaginatively see the LVSITANVS Carillon—were rooted in their individual past experience and background. (In the *experiencing* element, this process was explained in terms of experiences, thoughts, and perceptions that become (unconscious) memory waiting to be activated.) That is, while Ana focused her attention on the mechanisms of existing carillons (her background is in both engineering and music), Alberto directed his attention, often unconsciously, to buildings' structures, trucks, and unique designs (he is a mechanical engineer with expertise in computer-aided design). As such, this is an

example of how the *experiencing* and *early creating* elements of the process model intertwine, thus informing each other.

Meanwhile, we also began to discuss the sound of the carillon: “Was it going to have, for instance, a warm, full-bodied, or metallic tone? Did we want a higher- or lower-pitch instrument? Would it be better to plan for a long- or short-sounding instrument?” During this process, we reflected on our perceptions of the best-sounding carillons worldwide,<sup>10</sup> thinking and imagining how their sound could be further improved. This process involved mentally combining and recombining specific sound characteristics [*recombinatory metaphoric process*] from our preferred instruments to eventually start *hearing* them as our future carillon [*imaginative hearing*—which, just like *imaginative seeing*, involves the interaction of perceiving and imagining]. In Ana’s words,

I listen to the sound of different carillons [*external perceiving*], thinking of what I like and what I don’t like about them [*thinking and internal perceiving*], how they could be improved, combining and recombining the various sound characteristics [*recombinatory metaphoric process*], to come up with what I want [*imaginative hearing*]. And sometimes when you actually hear [the final product] you think, “Darn it, this is even better than what I imagined!”

At this point in the process of creatively imagining a uniquely-sounding instrument, we were not necessarily concerned with the means needed to attain that specific sound; we simply wanted to *hear* it in our minds as we imagined it would turn out in the future [*imaginative hearing*]. Being able to imaginatively see and hear the different possibilities for our future carillon was an important step toward creating and “living” alternative possible futures.

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<sup>10</sup> Carillons are uncommon in that their construction depends on such aspects as height and shape of housing tower, size of bell chamber, and location (e.g., near an urban area, a park, or a body of water). Traveling carillons are also unusual in that their construction depends on, for example, whether they are to play indoors, outdoors, or both. Thus, each carillon in the world is unique, with its sound and tone varying widely from instrument to instrument.

During the *early creating* element, entrepreneurs are still experiencing their surrounding world (including both the institutional and technical environments), but to a lesser extent than during the *experiencing* element. Instead, while engaging in the *early creating* element, entrepreneurs begin to create alternative futures in their minds. As such, they are not attempting to discover and devise ways to act on pre-existing opportunities they may have uncovered during the *experiencing* element; rather, they are starting to engage their imaginations to create novel ideas that, once materialized, have the power to make a difference into the future by originating “histories-to-come” (Shackle, 1979). As entrepreneurs experience the remaining elements of the process model, they move even farther away from strictly experiencing their surroundings; although, as the hopscotch metaphor implies, entrepreneurs might return to one of these elements, potentially experiencing elements concurrently.

### **Reaching an Impasse and Gestating**

When entrepreneurs creatively imagine novel ideas and products into the future, they also formulate in their minds the ways through which they can attain such creations. While imagining and thinking through the details of such processes, entrepreneurs may come across challenges they are not immediately able to solve, thus reaching an impasse. When entrepreneurs cannot easily overcome an impasse through conscious thought, they can resort to a process of gestation, that is, to letting solutions emerge from an unconscious process of creative imagination. This process is analogous to the first phase of “active imagination,” a therapeutic technique developed by Carl Jung (1997) and rooted in the natural healing role of imagination. This unconscious process is facilitated by metaphor and, as such, rooted in a recombinatory metaphoric process akin to the one

entrepreneurs go through while *early creating*. The difference here is that instead of being a conscious and voluntary process, the unconscious process of creative imagination entrepreneurs go through while gestating is fundamentally involuntary and unconscious.

After reaching an impasse, entrepreneurs go through a process of unconscious creative imagination that allows them to evoke solutions to challenges they cannot easily overcome. But before such an unconscious process can be triggered, individuals must develop a conscious intention to find a solution to their challenge by turning their “attention toward the unconscious with an attitude of expectation” (Chodorow, 1997, p.6). Both “attention toward the unconscious” and “attitude of expectation”—which compose the conscious intention toward finding solutions to a specific challenge—are characteristic of the active process of imagination (as opposed to the strictly passive and spontaneous emergence of images and ideas from one’s mind). Then, individuals must suspend their conscious intention in order to allow an unconscious process to generate solutions to the problem at hand (Jung, 1997; Modell, 2003). In a way, this suspension is similar to the creation of a vacuum in consciousness, a mental process typical of many forms of meditation aiming at communication and unity with one’s self, or the god within (see Dyer, 2012; Jung, 1997). Jung (1997) explained this unconscious process in terms of *wu wei*, the Taoist idea of “letting things happen,” of “action through non-action,” of “letting go of oneself” (p.74) to do the natural thing. Images and ideas are thus formed not randomly, but as the result of unconscious will (McGinn, 2004; Modell, 2003). In terms of the process model, this corresponds to entrepreneurs “letting things happen” or “letting ideas marinate (or gestate)” in their minds.

At times, the existence of a strong intention toward a particular goal—for instance, overcoming a challenge—is all that is necessary to trigger the process of unconscious creative imagination. This process comprises both “(unconscious) long-term memory and an associative process linked by means of metaphor” (Modell, 2003, p.31; also see Diamond, 2014). During this process, entrepreneurs go through an involuntary and unconscious recombinatory metaphoric process that organizes memories and associates previously uncombined experiences, again, *à la* Koestler (1964). This unconscious process is mentioned in the previous section when Ana describes her brain as “drawers in an armoire,” where one doesn’t “know what happens inside when you close the drawers but then … you come up with a new idea.” In this way, this quote is another example of how the *early creating and reaching an impasse and gestating* elements are not easily separated; rather, they overlap as entrepreneurs engage their imaginations, consciously and unconsciously, to create novel products and solutions.

In another example, one of the major innovations in our carillon relates to both ergonomics and responsiveness: To this day, its keyboard remains amongst the most ergonomic and its mechanical system amongst the most responsive in the world. And although the final instrument turned out to meet our high expectations, the process we went through to achieve these results was not an easy one.<sup>11</sup> In fact, we reached many impasses. One of them was our attempt to integrate the American and European standards for constructing carillon keyboards (each standard having particular strengths and

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<sup>11</sup> In developing this project, we (1) thoroughly researched and reflected on existing carillons, focusing attention on their keyboards and transmission systems (studying both their strengths and flaws), and (2) asked fellow carillonists to tell us how carillon playing affected their bodies (both positively and negatively) in carillons with varying levels of responsiveness. After gathering as much information as possible (e.g., bell profile, transmission system, type of wood and varnish, various possible alignments between the manualboard and the pedalboard, and the associated types of discomfort felt in the body while playing), we started incorporating positives while addressing negatives.

weaknesses).<sup>12</sup> Accomplishing this task would allow us to create a carillon keyboard on which carillonists could perform comfortably, with no need for constant adjusting of their sitting position and with virtually no discomfort involved; we were simply having a difficult time figuring out exactly how to overcome this integration challenge.

Nonetheless, we were determined to find a solution to this challenge [*developing conscious intention*]; however, we often had to simply suspend our imagination and thought processes and take a break [*suspending conscious intention*]. Specifically, we would go for a walk, solve jigsaw puzzles, drink strong espresso (sometimes beer), or eat a snack like dark chocolate or boiled beans; and when none of these worked, we would call it a day and go to sleep [*allowing an unconscious process of creative imagination to take place*]. While taking a break, we would stop consciously thinking about the issue at hand, letting our minds drift to other issues [*suspending conscious intention*], which were typically unrelated to our carillon project [*thus allowing an unconscious process of creative imagination to take place*]; but eventually, we would reach an “aha” moment. That is, our attention would suddenly shift to an idea that would unexpectedly pop into our minds and we would excitedly rush back to our work station to continue working on that specific challenge. The following quote by Ana illustrates how this unconscious process of creative imagination unfolded for her:

When I need to solve a problem with the carillon project [*developing conscious intention*], I eat, I even combine chocolate with chorizo to help with thinking and it helps me see things more clearly [*thinking and imagining*], not on that precise moment, but later. Maybe I’ll go outside and take care of the roses or play with the dog. On that moment I’m just worried with what I’m doing but maybe I’m

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<sup>12</sup> From our research, we learned that while performing on European instruments, carillonists often complained of constantly sliding down the bench, having to continually adjust the sitting position while performing. This was not a problem while performing on American carillons, but performing on these instruments seemed to frequently cause lower and upper back pain (particularly when the performer was used to playing mostly on European instruments).

still thinking about it in a relaxed way but I'm not focused [*suspending conscious intention*]. Other times I consciously need to do something completely different like going out with friends and stop thinking about it [allowing an *unconscious process of creative imagination* to take place]. And then it's like "Oh, how couldn't I see that?!" [Ana smacks herself on the forehead]. And then dinner is ruined because I can't stop thinking about it anymore and whoever is with me has to listen about all that. ... For example, for figuring out the problem with the adjustment between the manualboard and pedalboard, the "Aha!" moment [arose from] the putting aside of the problem [*suspending conscious intention*]; then, because I saw a little screw somewhere, that made me think: "Okay, maybe such a thing would work!" but at that time, I was doing something completely different [yet, still allowing an *unconscious process of creative imagination* to take place].

Ultimately, the goal of the *reaching an impasse and gestating* element is for the entrepreneur to access elements in the unconscious so that the conscious mind can later take the lead in interpreting them. During the unconscious process of creative imagination, the entrepreneur's spiritual eye evokes solutions to previously encountered problems (see Jung, 1997). By using the mind's eye, individuals are able to see with the mind, thus engaging their "mindsight" (McGinn, 2004). Through attention and conscious intention, insights into solving previously encountered problems emerge from the unconscious. However, as ideas emerge from the unconscious and appear in the mind's eye, they may still need to be interpreted and honed during a materialization process that occurs both inside and outside the entrepreneur's mind. This materializing of ideas or raw materials from the unconscious takes place during the next element of the process model.

### **(Re)Creating and Evaluating Imagined Futures**

In the *(re)creating and evaluating imagined futures* element, entrepreneurs finally overcome the challenges faced in the *reaching an impasse and gestating* element. As a result, they are able to (re)create (i.e., to continue re-working imagined futures that have not been thoroughly thought out yet or to create completely new possibilities for the future) and evaluate both potential imagined futures and the courses of action associated

with them (a process that is facilitated by experiencing imagined futures through anticipation and by engaging in empathic imagining, through metaphor, and in an embodied process of imagination). During this element, entrepreneurs go through a conscious process that allows them to actively come to terms with insights that passively emerged from an unconscious process of creative imagination (during the *reaching an impasse and gestating* element). The process of actively coming to terms with the unconscious is similar to the second phase of Jung's (1997) therapeutic technique of "active imagination." It involves consciously interpreting raw materials—mainly in the form of "emotions, impulses, and images"—from the unconscious (Chodorow, 1997, p.6) to reach unexpected solutions to previously encountered impasses, "at times accompanied by great ecstatic joy" (Modell, 2003, p.31). After emerging from the unconscious, raw materials may turn out to be no more than vague images or ideas, and thus may still need to be interpreted and further thought out (Jung, 1997). This notion also emerged in the *early creating* element in Ana's explanation that while seeking inspiration in existing carillons, she developed an "image in [her] mind but it's not a really defined image yet" until "you start thinking about the details." This quote illustrates how the *early creating*, the *reaching an impasse and gestating*, and the *(re)creating and evaluating imagined futures* elements may overlap, thus informing each other.

The focus during this element is not on the image *per se* but on what can be learned from reflecting upon it (Sartre, 1948/1978). Thus, as a means to both reflect on raw materials from the unconscious (Jung, 1997) and work out solutions to problems (Arnheim, 1969/2004), entrepreneurs can use various expressive techniques to give visible form to the images and ideas that passively emerge in the *reaching an impasse*

*and gestating* element. Writing, painting, drawing, sketching, and prototyping are examples of such expressive techniques (see Arnheim, 1969/2004; Jung, 1997; Shackle, 1979). While some entrepreneurs may prefer to use a non-verbal technique, such as sketching or prototyping, before setting things down in writing, others may favor starting with writing out the details to their imagined ideas and then proceed to prototyping. Either way, the goal is to use the technique most appropriate to the development and continuous study of all the details relating to the imagined idea or product.

In the LVSITANVS Carillon project, for example, the ideas resulting from “aha” moments, which occurred in the *reaching an impasse and gestating* element, were often broad and unclear (e.g., a vague thought about how a change in the transmission system could improve the instrument’s responsiveness, a faint image of a pedalboard combining both American and European features, a peculiar feeling that the challenge at hand could be resolved if we went back to re-think and re-imagine an issue that we previously assumed did not need any further work). Thus, to hone our ideas, we did a lot of sketching and writing [*consciously and actively coming to terms with raw materials from the unconscious*], a process that eventually resulted in a 53-page document that thoroughly delineated all the specifications for our carillon.<sup>13</sup> And, as a complement to sketching and writing, conversations with others also proved useful in continuing to hone ideas. Alberto’s quote illustrates these points:

When there are problems with the carillon, sketching, drawing, and graphing are crucial to translate broad ideas into specific solutions that work [*consciously and actively coming to terms with raw materials from the unconscious*], but of course these ideas and solutions need to be discussed with [Ana] because I need her opinion in music-related issues. Sometimes she’d say, “Opa! Not that solution,

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<sup>13</sup> The manufacturer of our carillon expressed surprise to see our thorough work: Carillon specifications typically comprise an average of five pages.

otherwise the action will be too heavy for the musician!” Then, we’d continue working on it.

Additionally, as we went through this process, we worked very closely with the company that was to cast and build our carillon. Given that this company had a lot of resources available in its manufacturing facility—resources to which we had no access on our own—its people helped us build a small prototype of the keys. Sketching, writing, and prototyping were key in sharpening our thinking about specific ideas [*consciously and actively coming to terms with raw materials from the unconscious*]. For instance, there were ideas that worked perfectly both in theory and in our minds; however, as we gave them shape, we found crucial flaws, which led us to continue our thought and imagination processes until no more work was needed. In Alberto’s words:

We wanted to solve the problem of noisy keys, which manufacturers have been trying to figure out for a long time. When we understood the problem, theoretically, it was in terms of energy, but forgot about the vibration caused by impact. When we saw the prototype of the keys, it made sense: The prototype showed us that something that worked in theory, didn’t work in practice. ... Because of this, I continued to work on it [*consciously and actively coming to terms with raw materials from the unconscious*] and decided to slightly chamfer the bottom and top of the keys, and this is unique in the world! This is the first time it has ever been done in a carillon keyboard, and it works, of course!

Giving shape to vague ideas and images is important because it allows waking individuals to dream their dreams in greater detail, and thus to make sense of what may initially have been vague or even incomprehensible (Jung, 1997). This allows entrepreneurs to create, thoroughly think through, and evaluate different possible imagined futures, including the courses of action necessary to attain them. Specifically, they begin by formulating particular courses of action, thinking through both the needed resource combinations and other means necessary to attain a particular imagined future (Shackle, 1979). But entrepreneurs typically imagine various possibilities for the future,

not just one. This demonstrates that entrepreneurs are actually “unknowledgeable” about what happens in the future (Shackle, 1979). The different imaged futures, along with the courses of action associated with them, are all one another’s rivals, competing for the entrepreneur’s choice, for only one will eventually be chosen (Shackle, 1979). It is important to note, however, that the entrepreneur who imagines these futures truly believes that they are not impossible of accomplishment—a notion that Shackle termed “epistemic possibility,” or “the absence, from the chooser’s thought and knowledge, of fatal obstacles to any imagined course of affairs” (Shackle, 1979, p.15). Many reasons may lead individuals to deem a future alternative possible; among the more salient concerns for entrepreneurs are resources, given their scarcity. Thus, before deciding and acting on a particular imagined future, entrepreneurs must also consider such issues as the timely availability of specific resources, as embedded in particular institutional and technical environments (Scott, 1992; Shackle, 1979).

In the LVSITANVS Carillon project, for example, as we worked out the details of the future carillon and its supporting structure, we were not sure how many sponsors we would be able to gather by the time we had to decide exactly how many bells our instrument was going to have.<sup>14</sup> As such, we designed a structure—along with an ergonomic carillon keyboard and responsive transmission system—that would allow the carillon to comprise up to 63 bells (even if on inauguration day it would only have, for example, 55 bells). But knowing that we might not be able to reach that number of

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<sup>14</sup> Carillons are extremely expensive instruments. Thus, assuming that we were not going to be able to find a single donor, we first split the cost of the carillon per bell, and then looked for individual sponsors to fund one or more bells. In return, sponsors could choose to inscribe, for instance, a small sentence, a company’s name or logo, or a family/family member’s name on the bell. Inscriptions were cast with the bells and, as such, were engraved on them for as long as the bells shall “live.” This sponsorship technique proved very successful; for instance, while some companies viewed this as a way to both advertise and be charitable, some individual sponsors viewed it as a way to honor their families or other loved ones.

sponsored bells (after all, money is typically a scarce resource, especially in Portugal's economic environment, which at the time of developing this project entailed a major financial crisis), we had to start imagining different, smaller-sized carillons, as well as the characteristics of each [*creation of different imagined futures*]. As part of this process, we also had to imagine and think through the means (e.g., sponsorship, details of the transmission system, raw materials needed for the supporting structure) necessary to attain the different-sized carillons [*formulation of the necessary courses of action*].<sup>15</sup> Imagining and thinking through the details of the various smaller-sized carillons and the means needed to attain them [*creation of different imagined futures and the necessary courses of action*] turned out to be a highly complex process that did not involve simply subtracting a certain number of bells from the larger-sized carillon; rather, it entailed our imagining of different carillons (and the various ways to accomplish them) that we deemed possible for our project because we thought they made sense musically and acoustically [*epistemic possibility*]. In Ana's words:

Before deciding, I imagine different carillons [*creation of different imagined futures*] but for me, in my reality, carillon one, carillon two, and carillon three are out of the question. I want carillon four because I want the best and biggest. ... I know that carillon one is going to be the one that I might end up having because it will be cheaper, so I will leave the options open to eventually get to carillon four at a later stage, meaning that all the structures will be already made and ready to house "carillon big," not just "carillon small" [*formulation of the necessary courses of action*]. ... If you dream, dream big, it might come true or not, but you dreamt it. And if you reach for bigger and get smaller first, if the option is there, you can get to bigger later because these options are all possible [*epistemic possibility*]. ... On the other hand, if I have a couple of alternatives and I have a preference for one but it's not possible, then I immediately forget about it and focus on the other one [*epistemic possibility*].

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<sup>15</sup> The idea at this point was that, if we initially had to choose a smaller-sized carillon, we could still try to find more sponsors after inauguration day; this would allow us to add more bells to the existing structure at a later date as funds became available. (The space and conditions for them were already available, so they could be added to the carillon with no danger of the structure collapsing.) This, too, is a unique strategy in the carillon world that we have devised and often use in our projects.

In addition to creating several imagined futures and the courses of action needed to attain them, entrepreneurs evaluate both the viability and the desirability of those imagined futures (Shackle, 1979).<sup>16</sup> As part of evaluating different imagined futures, entrepreneurs exercise their imaginations to picture themselves performing certain actions, allowing themselves to enjoy such futures by anticipation; to experience them through imagination (Shackle, 1979). As part of this process, they also engage their empathic imaginations “to vicariously experience the world as seen through the minds of others” (p.115) and thus to construct meaning (Modell, 2003); in this case, meaning relating to different imagined futures. Doing so requires a metaphoric process that “transforms the strange into the familiar” (Ozick, 1989, p.280). Once again, metaphor is important for the process of creative entrepreneurial imagination because it allows us to imagine “what it is to be someone else,” thus, providing us with an understanding of “the Other” in terms of our own experience (Ozick, 1989, p.279; also see Morgan, 2006). Much like the recombinatory metaphoric process explained during the *early creating and reaching an impasse and gestating* elements of the proposed model, the empathic process can be either voluntary and conscious or involuntary and unconscious. Either way, empathic imagining translates into an inner experience that results in a pleasurable connection with the other (Modell, 2003).

Empathic imagination is not new to entrepreneurship. For instance, Chiles et al. (2010a) suggest that this type of imagination allows entrepreneurs to “creatively imagine ideas with future customers in mind” (p.15) evaluating the appropriateness of an imagined future in terms of imagined end users. When used as part of a process that Dahl,

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<sup>16</sup> Although I separated the explanations of creating and evaluating imagined futures, these two processes often occur together, thus informing each other.

Chattopadhyay, and Gorn (2001) term imagination visualization—which involves “the creation of a new, never before experienced event”(p.8)—empathy can be created by visualizing the future end user interacting with the imagined product. This process allows individuals to bound their imagination by focusing on the end user, and thus to increase the chance for success. For example, as we engaged our creative imaginations to create, in our minds, different-sized carillons, their specific characteristics, and the courses of action needed to attain them, we experienced each of the possible instruments by imagining its sound, the touch of both manualboard and pedalboard, and the enjoyment (and potential physical strain) attained during a performance [*imaginatively experiencing possible futures*]. In addition, we tried to imagine, often through visualization, how (1) different audiences would appreciate the versatility, or lack thereof, of the different possible carillons to play with, for example, local folk groups, Renaissance ensembles, and philharmonic orchestras, and (2) other carillonists would feel while performing a concert on the various possible instruments [*empathic imagination*]. In a way, we tried to place ourselves in the shoes of both types of end users (audience and performers), each with distinct needs and demands [*empathic imagination* facilitated by a *metaphoric process*], to help us reflect on and evaluate the viability and desirability of each possible carillon, or imagined future.

In addition to facilitating the empathic process, metaphor is at the root of what makes imagination an embodied process, thus playing an important role in the interpretation of raw materials from the unconscious. As images and ideas become materialized, sounds, visual images, sensations, and emotions emanating from within are projected outside the body, allowing for the transfer of “meaning between different

sensory domains” (Modell, 2003, p.76). During this metaphoric process, individuals pay special attention to raw impressions from inside their bodies as they self-reflect upon their own intellectual and emotional reactions (Jung, 1997; Modell, 2003). Through reflection, they eventually convert these raw emotions from the unconscious into what they experience as feelings (Modell, 2003), a process that “is no more than the becoming conscious of organic changes” (Sartre, 1948/1978, p.97). Affective consciousness attained through reflection (Sartre, 1948/1978) is also essential in evaluating the different imagined futures. For example, while talking about her preferred imagined future for the carillon—carillon four, as she referred to it above—Ana experienced a bodily reaction: “Just talking about it, I’m getting goosebumps; it happens when I get excited thinking about it!” [*embodied process of imagination*]. And, although it was difficult for Alberto to describe processes that are, to use his words, “fantasy-like” (he often described himself as an “objective individual with realistic notions about the future”), he explained that what drove him to pursue a specific possibility for the traveling carillon project, despite all the financial and economic adversities, was “a sign, within himself, from Mother Nature [*embodied process of imagination*] … that fed [his] stubbornness” to pursue a particular imagined future.

Generally, in terms of the (*re*)creating and evaluating imagined futures element, entrepreneurs may experience “having a bad feeling” about a specific possibility, or prefer a particular imagined future because they are “going with the gut.” Dyer (2012) even suggests that how we feel takes priority over what we know. But such feelings are not universal; that is, different entrepreneurs may develop different feelings about the same idea. This is because imagination, as an embodied process, depends on each

individual's inner world, which encompasses their unique past, as well as on their conscious and unconscious intentionality (Modell, 2003). Entrepreneurs go through a similar embodied process during the next element, in which they may choose to pursue a particular imagined future because of a particular gut feeling.

### **Choosing and Enterprising**

The *choosing and enterprising* element, which marks the transition from ideation to actualization, is critical to the process of creative entrepreneurial imagination. Although any human being may have the ability to imagine novel ideas and products, what makes individuals entrepreneurial is their decision to act on their imagined ideas and, consequently, their role in driving the market process (Davidsson, 2004): They *choose* which imagined future to pursue (aided by an embodied process of imagination, feelings, and emotional anticipation), and they *enterprise* as a means to create that future (committing to the pursuit of that future and, as such, subjecting themselves to loss and uncertainty). This view of the entrepreneur aligns with Chiles et al.'s (2010b) radical subjectivist view of entrepreneurs as individuals who "exercise genuine choice based on their subjective expectations of an imagined future and can themselves create opportunities through such imaginative acts" (p.140). In this view, which is consistent with the non-deterministic assumption underlying the hopscotch process model, entrepreneurs create themselves alternatives to their current state and, as such, originate unexpected change (Shackle, 1979). That is, entrepreneurs are *not given*, by an agency outside their own thought, a set of pre-determined possibilities for the future from which they merely need to choose which one to pursue. Simply put, entrepreneurs are not "mere

tools of fate" (Shackle, 1979, p.19); rather, they are the creators of their own future (Dyer, 2012).

As we have seen, in the *(re)creating and evaluating imagined futures* element, entrepreneurs formulate different imagined futures (and the necessary courses of action needed to attain them), aided by both imagination and conscious and unconscious thought. In the *choosing and enterprising* element, entrepreneurs finally choose which of these imagined futures (along with its corresponding course of action) they want to pursue, committing themselves to this choice (Shackle, 1979). At the root of choosing is an embodied process of imagination (as explained in the *(re)creating and evaluating imagined futures* element) that, aided by thought, allows individuals to self-reflect and, as a result, to convert raw emotions from the unconscious into feelings (Modell, 2003). Thus, feelings play an important role in the process of making a decision and committing to that choice (Shackle, 1979). For instance, when an entrepreneur anticipates that a particular choice will produce enjoyment and satisfaction, this emotional anticipation, which Shackle (1979) terms a "good state of mind, a good state of imagination" (p.47) serves as the basis for entrepreneurial choice. Conversely, emotional anticipations of doubt and indecision do not lead to a good state of mind, thus influencing the entrepreneur to pursue a different imagined future (Shackle, 1979). In short, when choosing a particular imagined future, entrepreneurs go through an embodied process of imagination that allows them to, through emotional anticipation, become aware of particular feelings (e.g., "having a good feeling" about a particular decision)—a process that, aided by thought, leads entrepreneurs to ultimately choose the imagined future that gives them a good state of mind.

For example, the final decision for the LVSITANVS Carillon project involved a combination of imagining and thinking through all the details of each possible carillon, placing ourselves on others' shoes (or engaging our empathic imaginations, as explained in the previous section), and following good feelings [achieved through *emotional anticipation*] toward a particular size for our instrument. And as part of determining the size of our future carillon, we also had to decide which bell foundry was going to manufacture it. As with all musical instruments, different makers have different manufacturing techniques, which affect both the quality and the price of the final product. Thus, given the estimated expenses involved in the acquisition of this instrument and the budget we envisioned for the project, we had to decide whether we wanted a larger carillon (but with lower sound quality because we would have to use a cheaper manufacturer) or a much smaller carillon (but with a very high sound quality because we would then be able to afford the high-end manufacturer). These were the two obvious logical options. But after both giving some thought to the possibilities for our future carillon and reflecting on our feelings about such imaged instruments, we eventually decided to acquire a top-of-the-line carillon; that is, we decided to aim for both a high-quality and a fairly large traveling carillon. Most people aiming for a high-quality carillon would probably have imagined and decided on a much smaller instrument, but a traveling carillon with less than 63 bells would not give us what Shackle (1979) termed a “good state of mind” (p.47). This has been illustrated in the *(re)creating and evaluating imagined futures* element, when Ana expressed imagining “different carillons,” but only wanting “carillon four because [she wanted] the best and biggest.” This is also another example of how the process model’s various elements intertwine with one another.

Moreover, we had a gut feeling [*embodied process of imagination*] that we would manage to find enough funding (and, as it turns out, we were eventually awarded a €200,000 grant that, along with a €69,000 loan and various sponsorship sources, allowed us to accomplish this €350,000 project for a 63-bell traveling carillon, a flatbed semi-trailer, and a road truck). Alberto’s quote illustrates what motivated him to persist and see this project to completion:

What allowed us to go on was stubbornness, and Mother Nature’s sign that I felt within [*embodied process of imagination*]. … I knew that the LVSITANVS Carillon was going to happen, I had a feeling that we were going to get there [*emotional anticipation*]. … We know that life is cyclical, it’s sinusoidal, it has ups and downs, so if the system is down, there has to come a time when it will go back up, right? So, you only need to wait for the next wave. I believe in Einstein’s gravitational theories in which things go around and are always subject to the undulation of the system. … The [€200,000 grant] was that wave.

After choosing which imagined future to pursue, entrepreneurs start enterprising—a process involving any actions taken in pursuit of a chosen imagined future (Shackle, 1979). Enterprising involves both committing to the pursuit of a particular imagined future and taking on the burden “of accepting in advance the outcome whatever it may prove to be, and of accepting it while it is unknown” (Shackle, 1979, p.139).

Additionally, enterprising requires the use of resources, as embedded in particular institutional and technical environments (Kor et al., 2007; Scott, 1992); but given their limited availability, entrepreneurs must imagine and think about the best use for a particular end. Ultimately, this results in entrepreneurs investing in—and thus committing to—particular resource combinations and, as such, subjecting themselves to loss and uncertainty (Chiles et al., 2010b). As Ana expressed during our project’s final stages of development:

We are now applying for governmental support, which will finance 75% and we need a loan on the other 25%. We get the loan only if the project is approved. We lose everything if the project is not approved [*subjecting oneself to loss*], so it all depends on that now. ... It's 100% uncertainty because life is not a machine, you depend on people, you don't depend on a machine, and people are so subjective. If life was a machine, you could predict [the future] because you know the software that rules the machine. ... Then, there's crises, crises, crises, and political colors... some parties are pro-culture, some others aren't... and all that keeps adding to the uncertainty, so you can't predict what's going to happen [*subjecting oneself to uncertainty*].

In addition to acting on a chosen imagined future by combining and recombining available resources, enterprising also entails passionately believing in a particular imagined future—a mental activity that helps individuals create the life they have envisioned (Dyer, 2012). In particular, while combining and recombining resources, entrepreneurs experience, by feeling and visualizing with their mind's eye, the imagined future they wish to attain. Meanwhile, they act *as if* their novel idea were already manifested (Dyer, 2012).<sup>17</sup> In a sense, entrepreneurs are living from a particular end, “*as if* it had already materialized into the physical realm” (p.11) this allows them to fearlessly focus on that particular imagined future, which already exists in their minds, and to let generative energy flow through them to actualize that end (Dyer, 2012).

As a final example, when we decided to acquire the 63-bell traveling carillon we had thoroughly imagined and thought through—a process that included also thinking about, and acquiring, a flatbed semi-trailer and a road truck to drive the carillon around—we committed ourselves to having both an instrument and several concerts ready for inauguration weekend [*committing to the pursuit of a particular imagined future*]. At times, during the final months of our project, we felt extreme stress and even

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<sup>17</sup> Here, the notion of acting *as if* is not the same as Gartner, Bird, & Starr's (1992) view of entrepreneurs talking and acting ““as if” equivocal events were non-equivocal” (p.17).

discouragement; however, we carried on. In retrospect, our passionate belief in our imagined future was a major reason we were able to see the project through to completion. In Ana's words, "Without passion and without believing in [the project], you simply don't do it because you have no will to go on, you just don't care [*passionate belief*]." And Alberto expressed that "If I didn't believe in [the project], it wouldn't have happened. I knew that it was going to happen but that it depended on us and on our courageous will to fervidly continue fighting." As we enterprise to accomplish our imagined future, we also visualized, as Dyer (2012) suggests, both a completely built carillon and its inauguration concerts [*visualizing the chosen imagined future with the mind's eye*], rehearsing our performances on other instruments *as if* we were already playing on our carillon during inauguration week [*acting "as if"*]. This process is illustrated in Ana's quote:

Since the very beginning, it's "as if." ... The idea that I have the strongest in my mind is Christmas: I'm working on all these Christmas arrangements for the carillon, but I don't have a carillon to play during Christmas in Portugal, so why am I gathering all these Christmas songs now? ... I also play Renaissance songs in the organ that I want for the carillon; so, you are already doing work for the future [*acting "as if"*] because then it's there already. ... I see myself driving [the future traveling carillon], get into a place, disconnect the truck and start playing it! I see it in Christmas parties, markets, Easter, festivities, renaissance dances [*visualizing the chosen imagined future with the mind's eye*]. The future is true already, for me, it is an alternative reality.

As this quote illustrates, the acting "as if" feature of the *choosing and enterprise* element may be experienced since the very beginning of the process of creatively imagining novelty into the future. Once again, this shows that this is not a linear process; rather, features of the various elements may intertwine and be experienced many times over throughout the process, as if hopscotching from element to element.

Ultimately, the LVSITANVS Carillon was a very successful project (about 2,000 people attended the inauguration concerts, along with extensive local and national news coverage), and the carillon is often seen driving around the country to perform concerts at various locations. It also receives visits from carillonists worldwide who want to see, listen, and perform on one of the most innovative carillons in the world. Overall, imagination was fundamental to seeing this project to completion. Not only do I feel this way as both an academic and an entrepreneur, but Ana and Alberto continually emphasized the importance of imagination to entrepreneurship and the need for scholars to investigate its processes more closely. While Alberto explained that “entrepreneurship is the practice of dreams, and to imagine is to create from nothing, so without imagination there is no progress in entrepreneurship,” Ana stated that, “It is important that people worry about this kind of stuff, that people think about imagination and entrepreneurship, that people try to help students [understand it]; evolution only happens that way.” And she added, “Imagination is the most important thing, if you don’t imagine, how can you create?”

### **Discussion**

In this paper, I propose a hopscotch process model of creative entrepreneurial imagination that was both theoretically developed from readings on imagination from various disciplinary perspectives and empirically grounded in the lived experiences of a team of arts entrepreneurs. With this process model, I explore how entrepreneurs create novel ideas and products, providing new insight into five specific elements—*experiencing, early creating, reaching an impasse and gestating, (re)creating and evaluating imagined futures, and choosing and enterprising*—entrepreneurs go through

as they engage their creative imaginations. In doing so, I argue that the process of creative imagination (1) is a *sui generis* process, albeit one that influences, and is influenced by, other *sui generis* processes such as perception and cognition; (2) is a process involving partly *ex nihilo* creation; (3) may be experienced differently by entrepreneurs, with some elements co-occurring or unfolding in a dynamic and cyclical manner; (4) involves interaction between entrepreneurs and their surroundings; (5) requires a forward-looking perspective as well as interplay between past, present, and future; (6) comprises unconscious as well as conscious subprocesses; (7) is an embodied process requiring self-awareness and self-reflection upon one's inner world; and (8) requires entrepreneurial choice and the configuration of resources. With this study, I endeavor to answer Langley et al.'s (2013) call for more processual and multilevel research with a central focus on the individual, as well as Sarasvathy's (2001a) and Chiles et al.'s (2007) call for organizational entrepreneurship scholars to pay closer attention to the role of imagination in the entrepreneurial process. Generally, this paper contributes to the field of organizational entrepreneurship by providing scholars with a basis for further exploring the understudied topic of creative entrepreneurial imagination. Particularly, the proposed process model may prove useful in developing both research questions and research designs aimed at improving our current understanding of the processes and subprocesses involved in entrepreneurs' creative imaginations.

### **Implications for Entrepreneurship**

The hopscotch process model of creative entrepreneurial imagination has several theoretical implications for the field of organizational entrepreneurship. First, the proposed process model provides a basis for scholars interested in exploring partly *ex*

*nihilo* creation and, specifically, how entrepreneurs generate novelty and make a difference in the future by engaging their subjective creative imaginations (Shackle, 1979; Chiles et al., 2010b). Given its non-deterministic underlying assumption, the hopscotch process model is appropriate for researchers taking an ontologically processual approach to exploring “*states of affairs* that are not dependent on the operation of preexisting things” (Rescher, 1996, p.87, italics in the original). Particularly, the process model may prove useful to those taking a process (rather than a variance) approach, rooted in process (rather than substantive) metaphysics—a view that focuses on how processes (rather than substances or things) emerge and unravel over time (Langley et al., 2013). This approach is currently needed in our field because it can help entrepreneurship scholars gain an in-depth understanding of sequences “of *events* over time by telling a story about how and why” (p.288) entrepreneurs’ subjective imaginations unfold into the partly *ex nihilo* creation of novel ideas and products (Chiles, 2003, italics in original; also see Gartner, 2007).

Second, the hopscotch process model may prove useful to those exploring entrepreneurial processes from the radically subjectivist perspective of the Austrian school of economics—a view that embraces both *ex nihilo* creation and processual approaches. As mentioned earlier, scholars using this lens have already provided some insight into the central role of forward-looking imagination in the creative process by which entrepreneurs “continually generate novelty, differentiate themselves from rivals, recombine resources, and drive markets toward greater heterogeneity and farther from equilibrium” (Chiles et al., 2010b, p.152). However, there is still a need for a more thorough understanding of the specific processes and subprocesses involved in

entrepreneurial imagining and their connection to the broader entrepreneurial process. Thus, combining the hopscotch process model with radically subjective insights (other than the ones provided by Shackle (1979), as they are already included in this process model) such as capital, institutional, and market process theories, may enable scholars to make further progress on such important topics in our field as the emergence of order in nonequilibrium, the connection between entrepreneurship and economic growth, and the ways in which market processes and institutional environments influence—and are influenced by—entrepreneurs' subjective creative imaginations. This combination is appropriate given the compatibility between the constructivist assumptions underlying both the proposed process model and radical subjectivism (particularly, the perspective advocated by such authors as Chiles et al., 2010b).

Third, the proposed process model may be useful for scholars interested in studying opportunity emergence (e.g., Dimov, 2011), particularly those who take a social constructivist approach to opportunity creation (e.g., Wood & McKinley, 2010). For instance, Wood and McKinley (2010) draw on Shackle's (1979) ideas to explain the first stage of a conceptual model of opportunity creation in which entrepreneurs first conceptualize an opportunity, then objectify it, and ultimately enact it into a new venture. Although during the initial stage of this model the entrepreneur imagines opportunities and goes through a process of sensemaking “intended to clarify the viability of the envisioned future” (Wood & McKinley, 2010, p.68), the authors do not provide an in-depth explanation of the processes and subprocesses involved in imagining novel ideas. Thus, combining the hopscotch process model of creative entrepreneurial imagination with Wood and McKinley (2010), as well as with other work by scholars who also take a

social constructivist approach to opportunity creation (e.g., Alvarez & Barney, 2007; Baker & Nelson, 2005; Fletcher, 2006), may help shed light on how novel ideas emerge from both conscious and unconscious subprocesses, flow into entrepreneurs' actions, and eventually become both objectified and enacted entrepreneurial opportunities.

Fourth, creative entrepreneurial imagination, like any kind of “imaginative phenomena” (p.991), is fundamentally subjective and, as a result, neither directly observable nor easily measurable (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Thus, in order to shed light on the processes and subprocesses by which imagination unfolds, scholars cannot rely solely on objectivist—or disembodied—approaches (Modell, 2003). To advance the study of imagination, an introspective (first-person, i.e., both subjective and embodied) or intersubjective (second-person, i.e., both relational and empathic) perspective is needed; but these two approaches can certainly be combined with a scientific (third-person, i.e., both objective and disembodied) perspective (e.g., neuroscience) to attain epistemic plurality (Modell, 2003). Moreover, entrepreneurs give meaning to perceptions as they experience and interpret their environment. Meaning, as such, can be adequately understood only in the context of entrepreneurs’ unique (and thus subjective) interpretations of their environment. Thus, in order to continue exploring, empirically, the process of creative entrepreneurial imagination, I suggest a methodological approach rooted in (inter)subjectivity that acknowledges both the embodied and relational nature of entrepreneurial processes and the interdependence between entrepreneurs and their environment.

Fifth, the hopscotch process model of creative entrepreneurial imagination is well suited to serve as a basis to develop research questions and research designs intended to

study entrepreneurs' subjective creative imaginations. For example, this process model can be used to pursue phenomenological research, the goal of which is to understand the essence of a particular experience (Creswell, 2007). Through phenomenology, researchers may explore how novel ideas and products emerge by studying entrepreneurs who share their lived experiences with the phenomenon of creative imagining. Alternatively, researchers may opt for taking a narrative approach (Creswell, 2007) to analyze entrepreneurs' stories regarding their individual experience of creative imagining. This may prove useful in shedding light on "how entrepreneurs generate and modify their visions of the future" (Gartner, 2007, p.614). Overall, I encourage organizational entrepreneurship scholars to continue exploring the process of creative entrepreneurial imagination by using of a variety of research methods and techniques.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

Reflecting on this study, I recognize some limitations that may suggest possible directions for future research. First, the proposed process model was theoretically developed from a selective set of books that, although allowing me to gain interdisciplinary insight into the processes by which imagination unfolds, did not provide me with an all-inclusive review of the extant literature on the topic of imagination. It is possible that a different set of books might have yielded a different process model. Still, the three more recent books (Dyer, 2012; McGinn, 2004; Modell, 2003) were overviews of major accomplishments on imagination from a variety of disciplines (including cognitive psychology, evolutionary biology, linguistics, neurobiology, philosophy of language, philosophy of the mind, psychoanalysis, and spirituality), with some overlap in disciplines and insights. Nonetheless, future researchers may wish to consider (1)

developing a new process model by drawing on a broader set of readings; (2) drawing on insights from disciplines not considered in the chosen set of readings (e.g., sociology, developmental psychology, music psychology) so that they can incorporate other concepts and ideas not yet taken into account in the proposed process model; or (3) empirically grounding either the preliminary process model developed during the first part of the study (see Figure 4) or the further developing the hopscotch process model generated during the second part of the study (see Figure 5) by using an empirical approach different from the one used in this study (see, for example, the methodological suggestions provided in the previous section).

Second, any model is an abstraction intended to provide generalized understanding of specific phenomena; as a result, some details may be omitted in the proposed process model. For example, while reading through the books selected for this study, I ran across references to the collective unconscious, specifically, by Dyer (2012), Jung (1997), and Modell (2003). However, these authors did not explain the collective unconscious (at least in the selected set of readings)<sup>18</sup> and its connection to the process of imagination in sufficient detail to warrant inclusion in the preliminary process model of creative entrepreneurial imagination. In addition, neither the collective unconscious nor any subprocesses that might relate to it were mentioned during the second part of the study. Because this notion may need further investigation, I recommend that future scholars use this model reflexively and consider looking, in greater detail, into psychoanalytical studies addressing the unconscious mind and the collective unconscious.

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<sup>18</sup> Carl Jung, in particular, has explored the collective unconscious in great detail in other volumes.

The goal here should be to reach an understanding of how these concepts relate not only to individuals' creative imaginations but also to the entrepreneurial process *writ large*.

Third, although the hopscotch process model considers the relationship between the entrepreneur and the surrounding environment (including other individuals), it has as its point of reference *individual* creative entrepreneurial imagination. I believe that this was a necessary first step in the process of understanding how novel ideas and products are generated. However, as can be discerned from the empirical illustrations in this paper, creative entrepreneurial imagination can be (and often is) a collective process. Thus future researchers might consider exploring in greater depth the *collective* dimension of the process of creative entrepreneurial imagination. For instance, they might pursue ethnography, using both participant observation and *in situ* interviews to understand how individual imagination influences—and is influenced by—others' processes of creative imagination. Relatedly, researchers might consider using interaction analysis (see Sawyer & DeZutter, 2009) as a means to study how creative entrepreneurial imagination unfolds, collectively, amongst interacting individuals. Ultimately, interaction analysis would allow researchers to identify patterns in the collective behaviors of the interacting individuals, as well as the processes resulting in and from these patterns. Given that imagination is the wellspring of creative activity (Vygotsky, 1990), which occurs not only in the individual mind, but also within a particular social context (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988; Kim, 2006), interaction analysis might also allow entrepreneurship scholars to integrate the proposed process model with studies on the collective creative process (e.g., Hargadon & Bechky, 2006; Lingo & O'Mahony, 2010; Sawyer & DeZutter, 2009); specifically, those taking a sociocultural approach to creativity as “the generation of a

product that is judged to be novel and also appropriate, useful, or valuable by a suitably knowledgeable social group” (Sawyer, 2012, p.8).

In closing, despite its central role in the entrepreneurial process, creative imagination is currently an understudied topic in the field of organizational entrepreneurship. In order to begin addressing this oversight, I propose a hopscotch process model of creative entrepreneurial imagination that I hope will provide organizational entrepreneurship scholars with a foundation to advance inquiry. Scholars may find the proposed process model useful in guiding their efforts to improve both their theoretical and empirical understanding of how entrepreneurs engage their forward-looking imaginations to create novel ideas or products. My hope is that this paper helps pave the way for future researchers to explore, in greater depth, the process and subprocesses by which creative imagination unfolds as an essential part of the entrepreneurial process.

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## VITA

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