

PROJECT AND CREATIVITY

KEYWORDS

Tensions in Projects • Creative Projects • Contingency Factor • Multiple Correspondence Analysis
• Theory of Justification

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• ABSTRACT •

Creative organizations are characterized by project management and struggle with a tension between their creative activities and their project management activities. They must reach a compromise allowing the management of this tension. This research's objective is to explore this compromise as a contingency factor in the competitive positioning of these organizations in the creative market. Therefore, this research supports existing project management literature on contingency. To do so, we conducted a multiple correspondence analysis with data collected (semi-structured interviews) from 35 creative workers, artistic directors and project managers working in 11 advertising agencies. The theoretical framework of justification of Boltanski and Thévenot (1991, 2006) was used to explore the compromise as a contingency factor. This research proposes a practical and a theoretical contribution. On the one hand, it guides creative organizations wanting to modify their competitive positioning based on managing the compromise of the tension between creative activities and project management activities. On the second hand, it uses an original analysis technique to study the contingency in the management of projects.

Compromise between CREATIVE ACTIVITIES and PROJECT MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES: A CONTINGENCY FACTOR

1. INTRODUCTION

For a couple of years now, the concept of creativity has been gaining popularity in both the scientific literature and the socioeconomic sphere of the society. Like many disciplines, the organizational world is interested in this concept. In fact, there are numerous writings on organizational creativity, many of them built on the pioneering works of Amabile (1983). Woodman, Sawyer, and Griffin (1993) define organizational creativity as: "The creation of a valuable, useful new product, service, idea, procedure, or process by individuals working together in a complex social system" (p. 293). Different research does not stop at the concept of organizational creativity. Indeed, the scientific community has also shown interest in creative organizations that have, in some way, institutionalized creativity, which is becoming a recurring activity for the organizations. These organizations evolve in so-called creative industries (Zackariasson, Walfisz, & Wilson, 2006).

Creative industries are characterized by a project-based management (DeFillippi, 2015). Despite this, few writings specifically address the management of creative projects. Projects, are temporary complex organizations, as supported by the Scandinavian school (Morris, 2013). Therefore, one cannot transpose as is theories relating to the management of creative organizations to creative projects.

The issue of creativity in project management is addressed by some authors like Kliem (2014), but few of them concentrate on so-called creative projects. It is important to distinguish creativity as a process in project management, from the creative project as a type of project. The same distinction is found in the documentation on organizations where we distinguish organizational creativity (which can be found in all organizations) and creative organization that has institutionalized creativity. Therefore, the creative project is part of a crea-

tive organization which inserts itself in the creative industry which is characterized by essentially immaterial goods, that aim for collective imagination.

Literature on the management of creative projects bears little on the principles of project management. For example, Simon (2006) studies the different roles played by creative project managers. Also, there is Gander (2015) who studies the impact of spatial context on the management of creative projects. Finally, Harrison and Rouse (2015) study the feedback's role on final products in creative projects. These writings focus on some aspects of creative projects, but not on their management style. To this end, Marcella and Rowley (2015) explore how the principles of project management can apply to, and be beneficial to, the fashion industry. Their research addresses a tension between the principles of project management and the values related to creative industries.

Projects, including creative projects, are part of a competitive environment and therefore cannot be considered as an island as Engwall (2003) argues. By this very fact, they have a competitive strategy of their own and cannot merge into a unique model of project management (Shenhar, 2001). Creative organizations and their projects are characterized by a tension between creativity and business (Lampel, Lant, & Shamsie, 2000). To be viable, creative organizations must conciliate this tension by reaching what Boltanski and Thévenot (1991, 2006) call a compromise. The organizations occupy a singular competitive position according to the compromise reconciling the tension between their creative activities and their project management activities. This research's goal is to explore the compromise between the creative activities and project management activities as a contingency factor determining the competitive positioning of the organizations in the creative market.

2. CONTINGENCY AND SCANDINAVIAN SCHOOL IN PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Packendorff (1995) opposes three limits to the tradition of project management: the principle of universality, the absence of empirical studies and the lack of alternative project designs (Gauthier, 2014). The principle of universality also seems to be present in the literature of creative industries where most research focus on as ideal type of creative organization, that is, a large organization with many resources to invest in creativity. These are usually found in a so-called creative city which lists many creative organizations (Florida, 2002). The large creative organizations evolve in an environment that influences their creative activities. When we look at Child (1972)'s contingency theory, we can conclude that the activities, the performance, the structure and the competitive strategy of these organizations derive from the environment in which they find themselves.

Some project management authors have been interested in the contingency theory. Among them, Shenhar and Dvir (2007) propose a diamond project which underlies that the overall management of a project can vary according to its novelty, its complexity, its technical innovation and its pace. Lizarralde, Blois, and Latunova (2011) add to the traditional contingency factors the structure of the project client and the informal relationships between project participants. As for Sausser, Reilly, and Shenhar (2009), they use different contingency frameworks to analyze the failure of projects including Shenhar and Dvir (2007)'s diamond project. They conclude that an interesting basis for contingency analysis is to build on the work of Crawford, Hobbs, and Turner (2005) which distinguish "doing the right project", the strategic alignment, and "doing the project right", the capability alignment (Turner, Huemann, Anbari, & Bredillet, 2010).

Projects of creative industries are struggling with a tension between project management activities and creative activities which compromises their capability alignment. Based on Morris (2013), for whom project management is defined as processes, structures, practices, actors and actions oriented towards objectives and inserted in internal and external organizational and environmental context, we will focus on the compromise managing the tension between the project management activities and the creative activities as a contingency factor.

To understand how the project as a temporary organization of agreed rules is constituted and evolves, Bredillet (2017) proposes to consider its complexity and its morphology. To do so, Bredillet (2017) retains Gomez (2006) who proposes the theoretical framework of justification of Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) to study the morphology. As reported by Reinecke (2010), the theory of justification (Economies of worth) is a complex and contingent ideological construction. If Gomez (2006) focuses on the conventions’ morphology, Reinecke (2010) uses the theory of justification of Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) to understand the tensions between value systems; both of which are interested in complex adaptive systems.

As noted by Marcella and Rowley (2015), creative projects are characterized by a tension between the values of creativity and of business. Our research aims to explore the compromise between creative activities and project management activities as a contingency factor determining the competitive positioning of the organizations in the creative market. Creative organizations are very diversified, and it is futile to attempt to study all of them in a single study since according to the industry they belong to, they evolve according to a different logic (Thompson, Jones, & Warhurst, 2007). This study focuses on small advertising agencies and the project management activities that characterize them. The next section presents the theoretical framework used to study the objective of this research, namely the theory of justification of Boltanski and Thévenot (2006).

3. THEORY OF JUSTIFICATION

According to the theory of justification of Boltanski and Thévenot (2006), actors justify their actions by relying on the superior common principles that can be related to the order of worth. These orders of worth are subdivided in six worlds. They each have their own characteristics and are linked to particular value systems. Thus, according to

Boltanski and Thévenot (2006), the theory of justification allows the study of so-called complex organizations: “their operation obeys imperatives stemming from different forms of generality; their confrontation produces tensions and leads to more or less precarious compromises” (p.9).

The worlds presented by Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) are the inspired, the domestic, the world of fame, the civic, the market and the industrial worlds. Boltanski and Chiappelo (2007, 2011) added the projective world a few years later. To characterize each world, Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) use an analysis grid composed of thirteen categories. Table 1 presents the characteristics of each world according to the categories proposed by Boltanski and Thévenot (2006).

Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) explain that no complex entity can be confined in a single world. Complex entities can be conceived as presenting an amalgam of worlds where tensions emanate when there is confrontation between two worlds. The entities are viable because, by forming compromises, several worlds can coexist. “In a compromise, people agree to come to terms, that is, to suspend a clash – a dispute involving more than one world – without settling it through recourse to a test in just one of the worlds” (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006, p. 277).

As Marcella and Rowley (2015) point out, creative projects are especially characterized by a tension between the values of creativity and business values. The actors evolving within these projects must find a point of balance to ensure the viability of the project. The point of balance sought corresponds to the compromise between the worlds of Boltanski and Thévenot (2006).

The tension present in creative organizations that are organized by projects can be conceived as one between the inspired world and the market world where the aspect of creativity is associated to the inspired world and the project management aspect to the market world. Creative projects include workers that are artistic, passionate, independent, unmanageable, etc. (see Marcella and Rowley (2015)). We associate these characteristics to the description of the inspired world by Boltanski and Thévenot (2006). On the other hand, the documentation on project management associates the success of projects to monetary outcomes, customer satisfaction, market shares, and so on. (see Ika (2009); Shenhar, Dvir, Levy & Maltz (2001); Shenhar, Levy & Dvir, (1997); Shenhar, Tishler, Dvir, Lipovetsky & Lechler (2002)). We attach this emphasis on the pecuniary values of the market world as described by Boltanski and Thévenot (2006). Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) expose the compromise between the inspired and the market worlds as the creative market.

For creative organizations, the tension between the inspired world and the market world actualizes itself in a competitive environment (the creative market). The competitive positioning of the agencies within this environment has as contingency factor the compromise between the creative and project management activities. The next section presents the methodology used for this research to allow the mapping of the competitive positioning of the agencies studied.

1. The key words are those proposed by Boltanski & Thévenot (2006, p. 159-211) and Boltanski & Chiappello (2007, p. 109-128).

	Inspired World	Domestic World	World of Fame	Civic World	Market World	Industrial World	Projective World
Higher Common Principle	The outpouring of inspiration	Engenderment according to tradition	The reality of public opinion	The preeminence of collectives	Competition	Efficiency	Activity, projects
State of Worthiness	Inexpressible and ethereal	Hierarchical superiority	Fame	Rule governed and representative	Desirable	Efficient	Engaged, engaging, mobile
Human Dignity	The anxiety of creation	The poise of habit	The desire to be recognized	The aspiration to civil rights	Interest	Work	The need to connect
List of Subjects	Visionaries	Superiors and inferiors	Stars and their fans	Collective persons and their representatives	Competitors	Professionals	Mediator, project head
List of objects and Arrangements	The waking dream	The rules of etiquette	Names in the media	Legal forms	Wealth	Means	All the instruments of connection
Investment Formula	Escape from habits	Rejection of selfishness	Giving up secrets	The renunciation of the particular	Opportunism	Progress	Adaptability
Relation of Worth	The universal value of uniqueness	Respect and responsibility	Being recognized and identifying	Relation of delegation	Possess	Control	Redistribution of connections
Natural Relations among Beings	The alchemy of unexpected encounters	The company of well-brought-up people	Persuasion	Gathering for collective action	Interest (to)	Function	Connection
Harmonious Figures of the Natural Order	The reality of the imaginary	The soul of the home	The public image	The democratic republic	Market	Organization	The network
Model tests	Vagabondage of the mind	Family ceremonies	Presentation of the event	Demonstration for a just cause	Deal	Trial	The end of a project and the beginning of another
Mode of Expression of Judgment	The stroke of genius	Knowing how to bestow trust	The judgment of public opinion	The verdict of the vote	Price	Effective	Being called on to participate
Form of Evidence	Certainty of intuition	The exemplary anecdote	The evidence of success	The legal text	Money	Measure	Inserting, Causing to participate
State of Deficiency and Decline of the Polity	The temptation to come down to earth	Lack of inhibition	Indifference and banality	Division	Enslavement to money	Instrumental action	Unemployable, closure of the network

TABLE 01. Presentation of the Worlds¹

4. METHODOLOGY

Case study was chosen as the research strategy for this exploratory research (Yin, 2014). With this method, the cases must meet some selection criteria (Yin, 2014). For this research, the unit of analysis is the organizations, more precisely, the advertising agencies. These advertising agencies had to meet three selection criteria: 1- manage projects (implicitly, by definition, the projects managed are creative); 2- have been in business for a minimum of 3 years; and 3- be located in the same region. The objective of this research is to study the compromise between project management activities and creative activities as a contingency factor in a competitive environment. The agencies had to be in business for at least three years, because Gilmore, Carson, and Grant (2001) explain that organizations in business for less than three years are volatile and do not represent the reality of organizations. Finally, the agencies involved came from the same region so that the context in which they evolve is the same to allow a comparison between the cases.

A first email was sent to the concerned advertising agencies inviting them to participate in our study. After many follow-ups, 11 agencies accepted to participate to this study – representing about half of the contacted agencies. A total of 35 interviews were conducted within these agencies. We interviewed managers, artistic directors and creative workers. Interviews were conducted in 2011 in small advertising agencies located in Eastern Canada. They lasted between 45 and 90 minutes and were recorded, then transcribed. Each agency is identified by a letter, and each participant by a number in order to preserve the anonymity of the participants.

In order to further explore different themes with the participants, semi-structured interviews were chosen as the method of data collection (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Moreover, as this research was of exploratory nature, all the creative and project management activities were not fully known yet. Through the semi-structured interviews, we aimed to gather additional information on the activities that were not known initially. This technique allows for the comparison of different cases (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Patton, 2015; Yin, 2014).

The data analysis was carried out in three stages. The first step was a descriptive qualitative analysis for which we have mobilized the narrative strategy as presented by Langley (1999). To encode the content of the interviews, the coding of this first analysis was carried out with the NVivo software. This analysis made it possible to identify in details the creative and project management activities found within the studied advertising agencies. It also made it possible to propose a typology of the management of creative projects. Four profiles of the management of creative projects have emerged and so, discriminated the advertising agencies mainly according to their organizational design. The first section of the results presents this typology which will be used for the other analysis.

To represent the inspired and the market worlds, the second analysis conducted was a theoretical analysis carried out using key words proposed by Boltanski and Thévenot (2006). The activities identified in the first step were therefore codified a second time, using NVivo, to highlight links between the inspired world and the market world. The codes used are the keywords shown in Table 1 presented in the theory of justification section.

Finally, the third analysis conducted is a multiple correspondence analysis (MCA) which is a statistical technique to explore the underlying relations to an ensemble of categorical variables (also called qualitative variables - Cramer and Howitt (2004)) and to synthesize its relations in terms of geometrical positions illustrated using a perceptual map (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). Categorical variables with an associative relationship will have on this perceptual map a geometrical position of proximity.

In the MCA, we saw a way to map the competitive positions occupied by the small studied advertising agencies according the contingency of the compromise managing the tension between the creative and project management activities.

5. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The perceptual map shows the positions occupied by the small advertising agencies in the competitive environment according to the contingent nature of the compromise between the project management activities and the creative activities. It is built based on a cross table resulting from the crossing of the agencies, and two major groups of categorical variables: the first group of variables concerns the creative and project management activities, and the second group covers the profiles of the management of creative projects within small advertising agencies.

The group of the variable activities fall into two broad categories: first, the creative activities (A1 to A4); and second, the project management activities (A5 to A9). The creative activities are defined as follows: demonstrate a passionate attitude toward one’s job (A1); adopt atypical schedules (A2); inspiration from everyday life events (A3); attachment to the projects (A4). On the other hand, the project management activities are defined as follows: adapt the creative work to the business world (A5); target client satisfaction (A6); aim for high results (A7); sell the concepts of creative activities to clients (A8); accept lucrative contracts less interesting in terms of creativity (A9).

As for the typology of the profiles, it derives from two dimensions. First, from the nature of the work performed by creative workers: in some agencies, creative workers are responsible for the entire creative process, from conception to production. For other agencies, the artistic director is responsible for the conception of the projects, and the creative workers then do the production part of the projects. The second dimension is defined by the presence or

absence of project management tasks for creative workers. In agencies where creative workers only do work of creative nature, the project managers perform all the project management tasks. On the other hand, in some agencies, creative workers are responsible for project management in addition to the creative work. There are no project managers in those agencies and the creative workers have the responsibility to manage the projects assigned to them. Table 2 presents the typology of creative project management and the agencies that are within each category.

	Intuitive project management	Standard project management
Inclusion of all creative activities	PM artist H	Artist A, B, D, I, J
Division of creative activities	PM graphic designer C, G	Graphic designer E, F, K

TABLE 02. Typology of creative project management

The dimensions chosen for the multiple correspondence analysis are those of the typology of creative project management (Table 2). Dimension 1 is therefore related to the nature of the work performed by creative workers and has a Cronbach alpha of 0.72 and an inertia of 0.543. As Abdi and Valentin (2007) explain, with multiple correspondence analysis, inertia often finds itself to be artificially inflated which causes the explanation of the percentage of inertia of the first dimension to be underestimated. For this reason, these authors recommend to use the value of Eigenvalue rather than the Cronbach alpha. The Eigenvalue of dimension 1 is 2.170. Dimension 2 is related to the type of project management whether an intuitive project management when there is no project managers or a standard project management when there is project managers. The Cronbach alpha of dimension 2 is 0.68 and its inertia is of 0.51. The Eigenvalue of dimension 2 is 2.032. This implies that

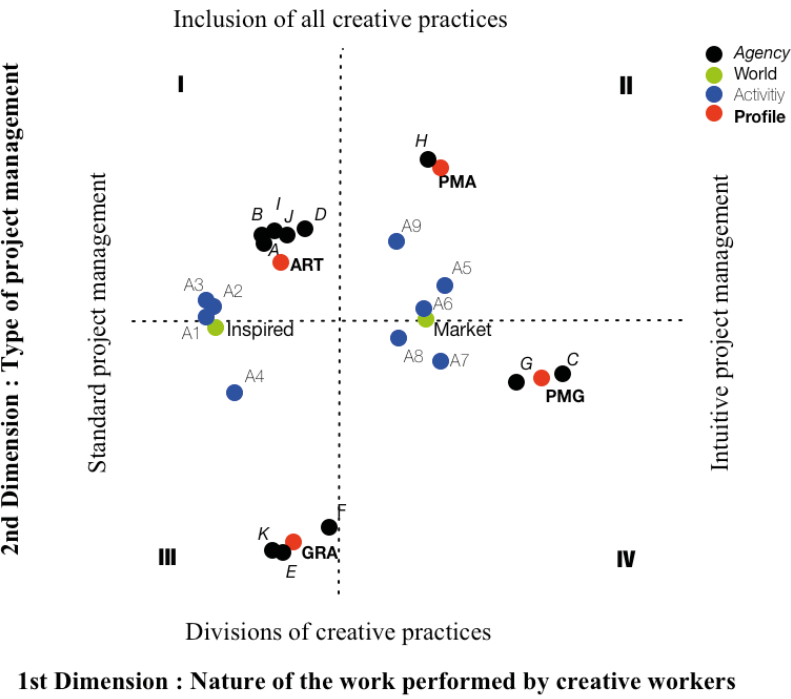


FIGURE 01. Mapping of the tension between the project management activities and the creative activities

the two dimensions or the two axes similarly explain the model. Figure 1 shows the graphical results of the multiple correspondence analysis.

The data entered in this figure are the identified profiles using the typology (Artist = ART, PM artist = PMA, Graphic designer = GRA, PM graphic designer = PMG), the worlds (inspired, market), the studied agencies (A to K) as well as the activities of creative nature (A1 to A4) and the project management activities (A5 to A9).

Figure 1 is divided in four quadrants presenting the management of the tension between creative activities and project management activities. In the agencies occupying quadrant I, the creative workers are preoccupied by the ensemble of the creative activities of the project, and the project management activities are carried out by project managers who adopt the project management standards. In opposition, in quadrant IV, creative workers are responsible for project management and focus on creative activities of technical nature. These have no training or project management experience and adopt an intuitive practice to manage their projects. In quadrant II, creative workers play a double role. They have an intuitive practice of project management, and they embody all the creative activities of the project. On the other hand, creative workers of quadrant III only perform technical creative activities on the creative plan and project managers apply the standards of project management.

In addition to the generic variation between the quadrants, there is a variation in the management of the tension between the creative activities and the project management activities within each of these quadrants. For example, in quadrant I, the scope of creative activities varies little from one agency to another. On the other hand, it is noted that agency D is moving further away from standard project management than the other agencies in the same quadrant. Therefore, this implies that project managers delegate certain project management tasks to creative workers, which naturally leads the agency to adopt a more intuitive project management than the other agencies in the same quadrant. Similarly, the same tendency is observed in quadrant III between agencies E, K and agency F. Moreover, it is noted that agency F is moving further away from the division of creative tasks, which implies that the artistic director within this agency assigns a few tasks related to the conception of the projects to the creative workers. In addition to performing the work of technical production of the projects, creative workers also participate somewhat in the conception process. The scope of the nature of the creative tasks varies little between

the agencies of quadrant IV; on the other hand, there is more intuitive project management for agency C. Agency G has to some extent formalized some of its project management activities. Within agency H, which is located in quadrant II, the creative workers perform both the entire creative process and the project management. Agency H is significantly further away from intuitive project management than the agencies in quadrant IV, probably because the creative workers must conciliate project management with the conception and production process of the projects. In order to properly carry out all these tasks, they must adopt certain standard project management, although they may not have received formal training in this area.

As demonstrated, all the studied agencies are struggling with a tension between creative activities and project management activities. These are viable on the creative market since they have succeeded in reaching a compromise, as understood by Boltanski and Thévenot (2006), between the creative activities related to the inspired world and the project management activities related to the market world. The achievement of this compromise allows the agencies to be viable, but in return it is contingent as to the competitive position occupied by the advertising agencies in the creative market.

For example, let's consider the competitive position of advertising agency F (quadrant III) versus agency H (quadrant II) as to the type of clients requesting their services. Much of the clients of agency F are from the Canadian federal government. "Our major client (...) is the federal government, we are really specialized at that level (...) we have the knowledge that several of the other new ones do not have, in terms of regulation, government procedures, etc." (project manager F1). The compromise is contingent since it restricts this agency to government clientele only. As a result, for the creative workers of this agency, mainly the artistic director who is responsible for the conception of projects, this contingency limits the use of his creativity. "We mainly work for the government. It can be harsh sometimes to try to be creative. They always bring us a kind of pre-made mold, so for someone like [the name of the artistic director], who has been doing this for 25 years, it can become repetitive and creativity can fade away" (project manager F1). On the other hand, agency H that wishes to attract government clientele, is confined to the retail market. "We have a good share in the retail market, but we do not seek our shares of market in everything that is governmental, municipal or public contracts" (owner H1).

7. CONCLUSION

Contingency perspectives in project management teach us that the viability of projects depends on contingency factors. These are mainly summarized to the novelty of the project, its complexity, its degree of technological innovation, its pace, the structure of the project client and the informal relationships between project participants (Lizarralde et al., 2011; Shenhar & Dvir, 2007).

Through an exploration of creative industries that adopt project-oriented management, we have noted a contingency factor that has not yet emerged in scientific documentation in project management. Indeed, further to the semi-structured interviews conducted in the context of an exploratory research involving 35 creative workers, artistic directors and project managers

working in 11 small advertising agencies, we noted the tension between creatives activities and project management activities as a characteristic of the projects of these agencies. In order to study this tension, we have retained the theoretical framework of justification of Boltanski and Thévenot (2006). The studied agencies are viable since they reach the compromise between the creative activities associated to the inspired world and the project management activities associated with the market world of Boltanski and Thévenot (2006). Also, this compromise is a contingency factor and guides the competitive position of the agencies in the creative market.

This research proposes a double contribution: practical and theoretical. First, given the contingency factor studied, the competitive position of the agencies in the creative market is mutually exclusive, meaning that an agency cannot occupy more than one quadrant at the same moment. In fact, if an agency wishes to change its competitive position in the creative market, it must reconsider the way it manages the compromise between creative activities and project management activities. Let's go back to the example of agency H given above. If this agency wants to develop the government market, a market they cannot occupy presently, it will have to adopt a configuration like agency F which is located in the quadrant III, meaning on the first hand confiding the project management to qualified project managers. On the second hand, it will have to give the creative conception of the projects to an artistic director and the technical production to graphic designers.

On the theoretical aspect, our contribution is firstly to use the theory of justification of Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) to study the tension of values in the management of projects in the creative industries. In addition to a qualitative analysis of projects of these industries using the worlds of Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) we have executed a multiple correspondence analysis in order to map the competitive positions of these agencies according to the compromise - the contingency factor - in the creative market. This is the second contribution of this research.

This research has limits, the main one being the number of studied agencies and the number of interviews conducted. In order to validate the compromise as a factor of contingency in project management in creative industries, additional agencies could be studied. There is only one agency in quadrant II; it would therefore be interesting to confirm the contingency effect of the compromise for this particular competitive position.

Future research derives from this exploratory study. In particular, it would be interesting to explore if this compromise is contingent within organizations managing projects other than in creative industries. The tension in creative industries is situated between the creative activities and the project management activities. We

should therefore validate if there is a tension in organizations of other industries. If there is a tension, we should determine if project management is the center of interest of this tension and of the compromise allowing us to manage it. Finally, we could map the contingency effect of this compromise in the competitive market. ♦

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