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Managing for serendipity:

Exploring the organizational prerequisites for emergent creativity

Abstract

In this article we explore the conditions for creative work in media organizations from the viewpoint of serendipity and the management of serendipity. Our study contributes to the field of media management research by theorizing change and creativity within the framework of organizational serendipity. Based on an analysis of empirical data collected with the diary method in a media organization, the article also discusses the rationale of managing for serendipity in creative media organizations from strategic, structural and cultural viewpoints. We argue that the management of organizational serendipity should be aimed at managing for serendipity, not managing serendipity as such. In practice, this means that serendipity management should be understood as creating suitable conditions for serendipitous creative processes and facilitating creative work, motivation and collaboration in the organization.

Introduction

Although the research interest in media management has grown rapidly, the theoretical foundations of this area remain narrow and fragmented (e.g. Lowe, 2016). This has not only scholarly implications, but it also impacts management thinking and practices in media organizations. We argue that there is a need for expanded theorizing on new areas and new concepts that resonate with current challenges in the media industry (see also Achtenhagen & Mierzejewska, 2016). Following Küng (2008), we argue that media management research needs to develop and apply new interpretative concepts and to focus more on media organizations and their internal dynamics.

Given the pace of change in the operating environment, media firms must rethink their organizational practices and develop new management practices to facilitate

change and progress (e.g. Deuze & Steward, 2011; Küng, 2008; Picard, 2011). In particular, firms must invest in managing creative work to enable the development of new products, services, concepts and practices. In this article we aim to advance the research in this field by exploring creative incidents in media organizations from the viewpoint of serendipity, i.e. the accidental and unsought elements of new discoveries that lead to something potentially valuable (e.g. Cunha, Clegg & Mendonça, 2010; Merton, 2004). Classic examples of valuable discoveries "by accident" or by unplanned serendipitous processes include penicillin and X-rays, and a later one Post-it Notes, where search for developing especially strong glue led to the creation of the widely used office supply based on lightly sticking adhesive that was usable as a bookmark that stayed in place (e.g. Gershon, 2017; see also Dew, 2009).

This article explores the concept of serendipity in the context of media organizations and reflects on its future role in studying creativity and change in the field of media management research. In this sense, the article's orientation can be described as prescient: we are addressing an interesting phenomenon that appears auspicious from the viewpoint of the field of scholarship (Corley & Gioia, 2011). We argue that serendipity represents an important future area of theorizing especially in the areas of change management and organizational creativity, both prominent but under-developed domains of research in media management studies.

Serendipity has received some attention in earlier organization and management studies (Cunha, Clegg & Mendonça, 2010), but not in media management research. In the leading academic journals of the field (see also Achtenhagen & Mierzejewska, 2016) – *The International Journal on Media Management*, *the Journal of Media Business Studies* and *the Journal of Media Economics* – the word 'serendipity' has only been mentioned in passing (Edge, 2011; Gershon & Kanayama, 2002; Lowe, 2011; Lundin & Norbäck, 2009). There is only one earlier study in which the concept has been used empirically (Putzke, Schoder & Fischbach, 2010). As well as contributing to the research area, the viewpoint of serendipity has the potential to open up new and innovative insights into how to develop practices of media work and media management.

The context for the research in this article is the magazine industry, a media industry sector where traditionally successful firms are under constant pressure to reinvent themselves and where it is notoriously difficult to predict the future of the business and complete the necessary decisions and actions differing from the established paths (see e.g. Christensen, 1997; Gershon, 2017; Kanter, 1989). It has been suggested that the Internet and digitalization in particular will lead to creative destruction in the magazine and newspaper industries (Schumpeter, 1943/2003; see also Nee, 2013; Schlesinger & Doyle, 2015; Van Weezel, 2010) as earlier practices and business models are rendered less effective in the new operating environment. Serendipity is an interesting subject of study especially in these kinds of rapidly changing organizations and industries, where the transformation is opening up new opportunities for businesses and professional communities.

This article explores how media management and media work (Deuze, 2007) can benefit from the new opportunities created by theories and practices of serendipity. Using empirical material collected by the diary method in a media organization, we explore and illustrate the serendipitous characteristics of creative media work. Our focus is to analyse how an understanding of the phenomenon of organizational serendipity can support and facilitate the development of creative practices and the management of creative work in the media industry. Furthermore, we discuss how theories of serendipity can contribute to understanding organizational change and creative work in the context of media management research.

The paper is structured as follows: First, we introduce the theoretical framework of our study, drawing on research on creativity management in the media industry and the literature on organizational serendipity. We outline our theoretical position and discuss the relevance of our study to the under-researched areas of organizational serendipity and creative work in the context of the media industry. Second, we describe our empirical material and the methods used. Third, we present the findings and analyse the serendipitous characteristics of creative work in a media organization. Fourth, we discuss the findings from three viewpoints relevant to organizational serendipity management, i.e. from a strategic, structural and cultural perspective.

Theoretical framework

Recently, the media industry has faced momentous changes in consumer and audience behaviour, in content design and production, in publishing platforms, in business models as well as in distribution channels and marketing (e.g. Küng, 2011; Napoli, 2011). Given these changes that are continuing to sweep the industry, media firms increasingly depend on creativity and capability for innovation. As many of the industry's long-standing principles and practices have been losing ground, it is paramount for media organizations and teams to constantly renew and reinvent themselves.

Creativity is a fundamental phenomenon in the media industry, yet one that has received scarce research attention. Although some reviews of the media management research tradition highlight the need for more research into creative work (e.g. Mierzejewska, 2011), there have been only few attempts to systematically analyse the role of creativity in the context of media management (e.g. Küng, 2008; Malmelin & Virta, 2015; Mierzejewska & Hollifield, 2006; Nylund, 2013). Also, the management of creativity remains one of the under-researched areas in the media sector, which is quite surprising from the viewpoint of the traditionally central role of creativity to media organizations and the value of creativity in coping with rapid industry transformation.

Creative work can be defined as a quest to generate novel ideas or solutions that are valuable and useful for the company (e.g. Amabile, 1996a; Bilton, 2007; Runco & Jaeger, 2012). In the media management context, the main approach to the phenomenon of creativity has been through creative products. A creative product or service has been defined as something that (1) is new or unique; (2) holds widespread interest or is a commercial success; (3) is regarded as creative by the professional community; and (4) is consistent with the firm's needs and strategies (Küng, 2008, pp. 148-149). Having said that, media industry products are rarely unique as such, but instead they combine different existing elements in new ways (e.g. Malmelin & Nivari-Lindström, 2015). From the viewpoint of the definition of creativity, it is crucial that the product or service is regarded as creative by the professional

community (e.g. Amabile 1996a; Ford & Gioia 2000). Csikszentmihalyi (1996) refers to the social dimension of creativity, that is, a collectivity of people who, in their capacity as specialists in a given subject area, will define whether or not a creative activity is significant. In an organizational context, for instance, creativity must produce something that is valuable to that community. In the business context, however, the novelty and utility of a product means that it must have the support of the wider audience and customers, not only of media professionals. In the context of media firms, a creative product or service can thus achieve its goal or purpose if it achieves the strategic goals set or if it is successful from the point of view of the media firm's business operation.

In this article, we approach serendipity in the context of creativity in organizations, and thus focus on social and collective processes of creativity (e.g. Drazin, Glynn & Kazanjian, 1999). In addition to the organizational aspect of creativity, the willingness to think and act creatively is strongly dependent on the individual's subjective state of mind (see also Gershon, 2017). Csikszentmihalyi's theory of flow refers to the process of optimal experience, which is based on the balance between the individual capabilities possessed and the challenges perceived (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). In the process of flow experience, the individuals feel more active, alert, concentrated and creative (Csikszentmihalyi & LeFevre, 1989). These kinds of subjective conditions are valuable in serendipitous processes. For example, sensitivity to recognize the potential value of serendipitous opportunities as well as capability to respond constructively to the challenges that may surface are related to individuals' capacity to focus on the task at hand and act creatively.

In the media industry where content design and production is an ongoing process of novelty creation, the firm's competitiveness is largely dependent on the creative processes and practices of daily work. A distinctive feature of many media products is that their contents are ideated and re-created on a daily basis. Contents lie at the heart of the media business, and therefore creativity and innovativeness associated with content design, production and development is central to the media industry. It follows that the leadership and management of creative people is a particularly important consideration for media firms (e.g. Albarran, 2006; Aris & Bughin, 2005;

Picard 2005). However, media organizations are not particularly systematic in their methods and practices of creativity management, and therefore improving the management of creative people presents an important strategic opportunity for media businesses (e.g. Aris & Bughin, 2005). Lucy Küng (2011, p. 53) observes that media firms have traditionally placed high value on content creation and production skills, but need to devote greater attention to organizational skills such as management and leadership. This is crucial to the ability of media organizations to renew themselves, to change and innovate.

In the context of creative organizations, serendipity refers to the accidental discovery of something valuable (Cunha, Clegg & Mendonça, 2010), and the process of finding valuable things that were not sought for (Merton, 2004, p. 250). Serendipity can be conceptualized via three aspects: it requires preparedness, openness to new directions and opportunities, and a willingness to question and challenge existing ways of thinking that will pave the way to innovation. Thus understood, serendipity is not just a chain of surprising events, but also a consequence of determined and practical efforts of an individual or a group of individuals to create something new and useful. It follows from this understanding that serendipity is approached as a phenomenon that can be systematically controlled, developed and managed in organizations. (Cunha, Rego, Clegg & Lindsay, 2015.)

One of the reasons why serendipity has received such scant research attention lies in the element of surprise that is so typical of serendipitous processes and that makes them so difficult to grasp and examine (De Rond, 2014, p. 342). A deeper understanding of the phenomenon requires systematic empirical examination of serendipitous occurrences and incidents (Cunha, Clegg & Mendonça, 2010; Cunha, Rego, Clegg & Lindsay, 2015). The literature on organizational serendipity has identified preliminary themes and questions that warrant follow-up and further investigation. In particular: Why are some organizations more successful than others in taking advantage of serendipitous opportunities? What kind of management is required in these kinds of organizations? (Cunha, Clegg & Mendonça, 2010; Cunha, Rego, Clegg & Lindsay, 2015; De Rond, 2014.) In this article we are specifically

interested in identifying, exploring and discussing serendipitous moments and incidents in creative work for creating understanding of the phenomenon.

Management of serendipity in the workplace can be approached from three organizational serendipity perspectives: the strategic, structural and cultural (Cunha, Rego, Clegg & Lindsay, 2015 p. 11). Firstly, from a strategic vantage point, the focus is on how the organization's strategy and strategic thinking support awareness and alertness to serendipitous opportunities. From the strategic perspective, it is essential to examine how strategies and strategic goals increase organizational possibilities to harness the incidents with serendipitous possibilities. What, for instance, is the role of creativity, innovation and renewal in the firm's strategy and how are these furthered in the workplace? Secondly, from the structural viewpoint, the focus is on how an organization can create the conditions where initiative can lead to serendipity. For example, how do the organizational structures affect employees' options for spontaneous initiatives and emergent solutions? Thirdly, from a cultural viewpoint, the focus is on how organizations facilitate the active role of staff members as agents of change and development. What are the roles of the organizational culture and work atmosphere in supporting serendipitous action? This is especially relevant, because organisational environment is fundamentally important for serendipity in creative work (e.g. Gershon, 2017; Johnson, 2010). Since there are no previous analyses of serendipity in the media industry or media management research, our empirical analysis in the findings section is structured around this framework of strategic, structural and cultural perspectives.

Management practices in general tend to focus on concrete aspects and elements of operations that can be controlled and managed. Creativity, on the other hand, is often regarded as a hindrance or complication to the management of an efficient production-oriented organization. It may be seen as a threat to the goal of organizational clarity and predictability (Davis & Scase, 2000, p. 7). In practice, serendipitous creative processes seem to run counter to many established management paradigms in that they are characterized by surprise, randomness and chance. These kinds of elements are rarely a conscious and deliberate focus in business management, or something that lie at the strategic heart of a business operation. Teresa Amabile

(1998) has observed that generally, creativity is not given enough attention in companies that concentrate on business productivity or on organizational efficiency. As a result, many prevailing management paradigms and organizational models prevent and repress creativity (Amabile, 1998). This especially applies to serendipitous processes, which we approach as a particularly unpredictable and emergent form of creative organizational processes (see also Sawyer, 1999), i.e. type of emergent creativity. Thus, we use the concept of emergent creativity to refer to creative opportunities and prospects that arise unexpectedly in day-to-day work in organizations. Serendipitous processes are difficult to predict and, due to their emergent nature, particularly difficult to control or manage.

Methods and empirical material

The empirical material for this research was collected among an editorial team working in a media organization specialized in journalism and magazine publishing. The organization is part of a major international media corporation. During the time period of the study, the team was working on a cross-media product development project, which offered a particularly interesting setting to study creative work in a legacy media organization. The cross-media product the team was undertaking was assigned to comprise an interactive online service, social media features, an app as well as a new magazine, all elements around a specific content theme. In addition, the team was entrusted to develop a new model for creative content production in the company, i.e. to build a new team that focuses on producing specific content area journalism to various magazines and websites in the company.

The respondents comprised the whole editorial team, which was responsible for the creation of the new cross-media product. The team consisted of 10 journalism and media professionals (including the editor-in-chief, managing editor, copy editor, journalists, producer, art director and graphic designer as well as project manager and concept designer). The participants were experienced media professionals with an average age of 43 years. They had worked in the media industry on average for 16 years.

The empirical material was collected by the diary method (Balogun, Huff & Johnson, 2003; Bolger, Davis & Rafaeli, 2003; Ohly, Sonnentag, Niessen & Zapf, 2010; see also Unsworth, 2001) and the critical incident technique (Butterfield, Borgen, Amundson & Malio, 2005; Flanagan, 1954). The participants were asked to actively analyse and assess their work and to reflect on practices based on their personal experiences of events occurring in the workplace. The technique guides the respondents to evaluate the critical incidents and factors at work, and to analyze which incidents are the most significant from the perspective of their work and the team. The method focuses on the self-perception of the participants, which limits the scope of potential conclusions. However, this kind of self-evaluation is a useful method for purposes of exploring not only actual events and practices, but also, and especially, the respondents' thoughts, feelings and personal interpretations. The diary method thus ties in with practitioner research (Balogun, Huff & Johnson, 2003, pp. 210-211), in which the research participants analyse the organization's working practices and prevailing habits.

There is extensive debate and discussion among media professionals about the state of the media industry, which may have had an effect of converging the views and arguments of the respondents in the research setting. When a respondent is placed in the role of an expert of the field in question, it is possible that the role makes them inclined to answer in a manner that is consistent with the mainstream views, ways of thinking and discourses in the field. In our study, a deliberate effort was made to avoid the jargon of the day by steering the respondents towards the focus on the specific editorial team in which they worked. This supports the validity of the empirical material through the approach that the respondents were not placed in an artificial position in the study, for instance in a role of a general media expert, but they were encouraged to answer the questions from the vantage-point of their own jobs and editorial teams.

The respondents wrote weekly diary entries to document their thoughts on the most critical incidents relating to creative work during the working week. The guiding diary questions were formulated to encourage the participants to address them from the vantage point of their own work. The researchers e-mailed three diary questions to

the respondents every Friday morning. The participants were asked to describe critical incidents that (1) had facilitated creative work, (2) had constrained creative work and (3) that corresponded to the particular phase of the project. A total of 13 weeks worth of empirical data was collected in two phases, first for seven weeks in November and December in 2013, followed by six weeks in January and February 2014. In total, the empirical material comprised 279 individual diary entries and the response rate to the guiding questions was 72%.

In addition to the diary writings, the research team met with the respondents as a group twice: first, before the start of the first diary-writing period and second, between the two research phases. The initial gathering provided the researchers with an opportunity to discuss the research setting in detail with the participants. The meeting between the research phases enabled the researcher team to discuss with the respondents the topical issues related to the themes of the study.

Our aim was to identify, elaborate and theorize the phenomenon of serendipity from different viewpoints based on a qualitative interpretative analysis of the empirical data (Alasuutari, 1996) and the framework of three categories of organizational serendipity (Cunha, Rego, Clegg & Lindsay, 2015). The analysis was guided by our research questions: How does serendipity emerge in creative work in the media organization, and how can management support organizational serendipity? The research questions were initially formulated based on the existing literature and further elaborated during the iterative analysis of the empirical material, as our understanding of the phenomenon and the key related concepts evolved (Eisenhardt, 1989; Weston, Gandell, Beauchamp, McAlpine, Wiseman, & Beauchamp, 2001).

Our focus was on providing a theoretically sensitive analysis, i.e. on 'sensitizing' (Glaser & Strauss, 1967/2009, pp. 38-39) so that the findings and concepts create a meaningful representation of the phenomenon in question, coupled with illustrations emerging from the empirical data. This was considered a useful route to follow since our aim was to identify and illustrate features of a phenomenon that had not been previously addressed in the research field.

First, we independently read through the diary responses several times and searched for serendipitous incidents. Second, we discussed the initial findings and exchanged notes about various incidents, and settled on the incidents that were to comprise the actual material for the analysis. Third, we independently categorized and analysed the incidents in detail using our theoretical framework, and then proceeded to review and discuss the findings and differences between our interpretations. Fourth, we crystallized the key findings within the categories and wrote up the analysis accordingly.

Findings: empirical illustrations

The aim of our analysis is to identify and empirically illustrate features of serendipity in media work and to elaborate on the significance of serendipitous incidents from a management point of view. We do this using a framework that consists of three perspectives, i.e. strategic, structural and cultural (Cunha, Rego, Clegg & Lindsay, 2015, p. 11). First, we focus on media professionals' awareness and alertness to serendipitous opportunities and ways of taking advantage of those opportunities in the light of the company's and the team's strategic aims. Second, we elaborate on organizational structures and practices, especially on day-to-day ways of working and managing that facilitate serendipity. Third, we consider the aspects of organizational culture and interaction that support serendipitous opportunities for change in the editorial team.

Strategic perspective

The editorial team's strategic aim that was set by the media company was to design, produce and launch a new cross-media content product and interactive online service around a specific content area. In addition, the team was tasked to develop a new approach to organizing creative content production in the media company. The project goals served as a source of inspiration for team members' creative work. As one of them explained: *'I feel I'm involved in just the sort of thing that people are now talking about: having the courage to do something new of which there's no prior knowledge or experience.'* (Respondent 7) This kind of progressive attitude and

motivation in relation to the project's strategy and goals characterized the atmosphere in the team more generally. Thus, the team's goals provided a solid foundation for the emergence and progress of serendipitous processes.

A pivotal member of the top management team who had been the main architect of the development project in question, suddenly and unexpectedly resigned while the project was still in the launch stage. Reactions in the project team ranged from surprise to shock, and for a moment the project was brought to a halt. However, it was soon realized that the new situation offered unforeseen serendipitous opportunities: *'The departure from the management team threw many aspects of the project back to square one, which in many ways was a good thing.'* (Respondent 8) The unexpected event created valuable opportunities to reconsider the project's aims and guidelines, as another respondent noted: *'Although the news came as a complete bombshell, the very next day my colleagues and I were thinking, okay let's get back to work. Let's not feel sorry for ourselves but think about the opportunities this opens up. There's no point in us just waiting to see who's going to decide, but we must firmly take the lead and make our own decisions.'* (Respondent 2) The surprising incident opened up new opportunities to rethink the project strategy and its implementation, which would have not been possible in the previous management setting. Existing strategic guidelines were quickly re-evaluated, the project's targets reassessed and steps taken to exploit the serendipitous potential in redirecting the creative project. In other words, the serendipitous opportunity made it possible for the team management to seize the moment and change its strategic direction.

Random serendipitous incidents can be crucial for reaching the strategic aims. The conditions for serendipity can also be consciously created and supported through individual effort, as reported by one respondent: *'Each day I've talked with someone from within the group, taking the viewpoint that "you created the project, what can I learn from it".'* (Respondent 7) Targeted and intentional efforts to cross organizational boundaries offered another fruitful way of enabling serendipitous opportunities: *'Even though we're not yet collaborating in content production we thought we should meet and talk. It was a nice meeting that pointed at opportunities for some new forms of cooperation.'* (Respondent 2) In the legacy media organization

characterized by a siloed organizational structure, common goals and intentions, as well as respective initiatives, are fundamental requirements for collaboration.

Serendipitous potential is an inherent characteristic of creative media work. However, turning that potential into concrete benefit requires a foundation in strategic thinking and choices. The strategic goals and guidelines laid down by management form a crucial basis for serendipitous potential in media organizations. In addition, managerial openness to new ideas and possibilities as well as willingness to question and reconsider previously made strategic decisions is fundamental for being able to take advantage of serendipitous opportunities in media work. Also, from the serendipity point of view, unexpected organizational changes may open up new opportunities for development through a rethinking of earlier decisions or directions of work.

Structural perspective

During the transitional period to the new organizational structure, the team members worked simultaneously with their previous editorial teams and with the new development team. At the time, the newly formed team was also developing its working methods. The structural efforts to facilitate open idea creation were particularly valued: *'Our ideation day outside the office was inspiring and clearly moved the project forward. Lots of good ideas came up during the day.'* (Respondent 10) New ways of working and an emphasis on creating 'free space' for potential serendipitous processes were considered central for new idea development. Management was able to support this through the creation of organizational structures, spaces and procedures that instilled a sense of social cohesion, collectivity and commitment among team members. One respondent described this as follows: *'I moved to work in the team space, which gave me a new sense of drive and team spirit. I enjoy the shared office space.'* (Respondent 3)

The team members' self-organizing initiatives were crucial for organizational serendipity. Serendipitous processes required ability and willingness to reformulate and even call into question suggested or established working conditions and practices.

The following diary excerpt illustrates this: '*We did it together, with great efficiency and working in a good team spirit. It had been suggested to us that we all just concentrate on doing our own bit, but we thought it would be better to pool our resources.*' (Respondent 1) The team members took the initiative to think and act independently, thus creating valuable structural solutions for completing the creative tasks. This was recognized as essential for the new team's creative work: '*I'm really pleased about this genuine self-direction. It's vital to the whole team's existence that individual journalists get their freedom and responsibility.*' (Respondent 2)

As illustrated above, freedom and autonomy were organizational prerequisites for the onset of serendipitous processes in the team. However, unlimited ideation without rigorous work arrangements and a clear connection to operational realities and concrete goals could prohibit serendipitous processes, as discussed by one respondent: '*It would have been easier if at least some specs had been set out from the beginning: who will be involved, what sort of coverage is being targeted, who are the target group. As it is, many of the meetings are just an exercise in casting ideas around and daydreaming. It's easy to throw ideas around if you don't have to stop to think about who's going to do it all and when they're going to do it and with what tools.*' (Respondent 1) If the structural realities of work did not coincide with and support serendipitous processes, the team members' sense of frustration inhibited the creative potential of serendipity. When current work processes and structures did not allow team members to participate in the new creative initiatives, the outcome became discouraging. In the words of one respondent*: 'Small meetings are being held all the time, but it's unfortunate how rarely you have the time to attend them."* (Respondent 6)

Although serendipity is essentially about making surprising discoveries by accident, and thus intuitively opposite or even contradictory to the idea of structures, structure and serendipity are not mutually exclusive elements of organizational life and media work. Freedom is crucial for serendipity, but at the same time clear organizational structures and a sense of direction are fundamental prerequisites for organizational serendipity. The organizational structures that not only allow for serendipity, but specifically encourage and support emergent creativity and high attentiveness must be

consciously designed, constructed and supported by management, especially in order to empower the motivation and productive self-direction of creative professionals.

Cultural perspective

Our case indicated that building a sense of trust and collegial togetherness among team members was vital for serendipity and creative work. In the new team the sense of mutual trust began to develop with the members' involvement in joint team activities and through their shared experiences. One respondent had the following example: *'Small things matter in building up a team spirit. When our team went out to decorate the company's Christmas tree, I felt a great sense of a strengthening team spirit.'* (Respondent 7) A sense of being able to relate together to the team processes and goals supported the team members' willingness to engage in collective creative ideation: *'It seems that all sorts of things are possible and down to your own enthusiasm – just get your ideas flying!'* (Respondent 5) The sense of togetherness and mutual trust added to the team's serendipitous potential, and management had a crucial role in creating space and time for this.

In the new team, a conscious effort was needed to create a workplace culture that supported collectivity and a willingness to share thoughts and ideas. The team members were encouraged to participate in developing new ideas and to openly discuss various issues, even ones that may have seemed random or irrelevant at the time. As one team member wrote: *'On Monday we all met for the first time to discuss the future – it was great. We decided to make decisions, but I think we strayed into future planning, but that's fine too. We discussed future approaches and business models, which gave me the sense that I can influence my work and that I will learn from and be inspired by my colleagues.'* (Respondent 8) However, there was a fine line between thorough, fruitful discussions and spending excessive time debating minor points, which detracts from serendipitous potential: *'The journalist who was there drew attention to the importance of the journalist's and layout team's collaboration. Of course this is important, but the discussion perhaps veered into irrelevant territory since we were not supposed to discuss the problems of an individual magazine, which is where we eventually went.'* (Respondent 2)

For the new team to succeed in creative media work, it was essential to recognize and understand the complicated features and challenges of creative processes and their management. One of the respondents presented the following illustration of this aspect of serendipity: *'Another joint observation was that since this is such a large and diverse project, everyone must be prepared for possible minor confusions (despite conscious attempts to avoid them) and in that sense it's necessary for everyone to develop a tough skin, so that rather than being offended one tries to get to the root of the matter.'* (Respondent 7) Thus, team members need to feel they were safe and supported when seizing possibly serendipitous opportunities, which are often uncertain and risky. Management has a fundamental role to play in enabling this, at once making sure they leave enough room for creative professionals' independent thinking and judgement to decide on the details of their work.

Serendipitous processes are typically difficult, if not impossible to manage 'from above' by command or control. The role of management in supporting and enabling serendipitous processes by building a culture that supports openness, questioning, self-esteem and self-initiative is fundamental for creative media work that is aimed at developing something new.

Discussion and conclusions

In this article we have explored creative work in a media organization from the viewpoint of serendipity and the management of serendipity. The following discusses the rationale of managing for serendipity in media organizations with a view to contributing theoretically to media management research and to creating a foundation for understanding and studying serendipity and emergent creativity in the media industry. We also put forward some preliminary discoveries and insights into practical management for serendipitous creativity in media organizations.

In the literature, serendipity is defined and understood both as an organizational process that can be steered and supported, and as an organizational process that cannot be controlled or managed (e.g. Cunha, Rego, Clegg & Lindsay, 2015). Based

on our empirical analysis, we argue that an organization is better placed to produce serendipitous opportunities if management works consciously to support and promote creativity and creativity-enhancing culture in the workplace (see also Cunha, Clegg & Mendonça, 2010, p. 320). Our empirical analysis shows that a focus on strategic, structural and cultural perspectives in the creative organization is crucial for serendipity. Management for serendipity requires that all these three elements are taken into consideration: strategic goals that accelerate serendipitous discovery, structural solutions that unchain the creative potential of the team, and organizational culture that facilitates the openness and questioning that lies at the heart of serendipity.

How, then, should organizations be managed so that they can be serendipitous communities? Since every organization, function and team is unique, it is hard to give specific guidelines for managing serendipity. The management *of* organizational serendipity is an inherently complicated and contradictory idea. Instead, the focus should be on managing *for* serendipity, i.e. on managing people with a view to promoting conditions and opportunities for serendipity. This approach is consistent with Amabile's idea that the management of organizations should not be focused on managing creativity as such, but the aim should be to support and promote creativity, i.e. to manage for creativity (Amabile, 1996b; Amabile & Khaire, 2008). If a media organization seeks to create new innovations through serendipitous processes, one way to do that is to support creativity by enhancing the organizational conditions for creative thinking as well as specifying challenges that motivate and inspire creative professionals, and may thus lead to optimal experiences, i.e. flow (e.g. Csikszentmihalyi & LeFevre 1989; Csikszentmihalyi 1990). In practice, as we have illustrated in our empirical analysis, this means developing working environments that facilitate creative processes and that consciously aim to eliminate factors that might prevent or hamper potential for optimal experiences and emergent creativity.

In managing for serendipity, the first and most important strategy is to develop awareness and understanding of the value of serendipitous opportunities in the organization. Cunha, Clegg and Mendonça (2010, p. 327) have noted that awareness of serendipity can help in recognizing, defining and illustrating processes of change

that otherwise might remain ignored. In a media organization aiming to create new innovations, managers should work to enhance the awareness about serendipity, attentiveness on creative work as well as create the conditions and opportunities for creative encounters.

From the perspective of organizational serendipity, it is significant that management works to empower employees to act as agents of change in the organization (Cunha, Rego, Clegg & Lindsay, 2015). Serendipity in teams requires awareness that it is acceptable to try out new things and to fail or make mistakes (Cunha, Clegg & Mendonça, 2010, pp. 324-325). Key drivers for the kind of mutual understanding and trust that are needed to enable serendipitous processes are interaction and social relations in the workplace community. Merton has described these kinds of communities of interaction as 'serendipitous sociocognitive microenvironments' (Merton, 2004, pp. 259-260). In cross-functional teams in particular, one of the key tasks for management is to create the conditions for supportive interaction in the workplace.

Media managers must seek to create the conditions that will pave the way to organizational serendipity and to remove any obstacles to emergent creativity. Managing for serendipity makes the workplace community more aware and alert to surprising and unexpected opportunities (Cunha, Clegg & Mendonça, 2010, p. 328). In practice, this means organizing operations in such a way that people are prepared to recognize new surprising opportunities and to act accordingly (Cunha, Rego, Clegg & Lindsay, 2015, p. 10). If the media organization's strategic aim is to change, but its structures prevent boundary-crossing interaction or its culture does not encourage experimentation, then the potential for serendipity may easily be stifled.

Our article has essential implications for future research. Firstly, there is a need for systematic basic research that supports theory development of serendipitous processes and their management in the context of the media industry. To understand its transformation, we must gain a deeper conceptual knowledge of emergent creative processes related to media production. Based on our empirical analysis, we suggest that the strategic, structural and cultural perspectives (Cunha, Rego, Clegg & Lindsay,

2015) offer prospective paths for studying organizational serendipity in media organizations. We argue that it is vital to engage in a conceptual discussion (Corley & Gioia, 2011) about the potential influence of serendipity on research on media management and media work. We propose that research on serendipity has an important contribution to make particularly in the emerging fields of media management, such as creativity management (Malmelin & Virta 2015; Nylund 2013), change management (Achtenhagen & Raviola, 2009; Järventie-Thesleff, Moisander & Villi 2014), innovation management (Sylvie & Schmitz Weiss, 2012) and strategic renewal and management (Horst & Moisander, 2015; Maijanen & Jantunen, 2014).

Secondly, research into serendipity and creative processes in media work must emphasize the viewpoint of practices, since in the media sector serendipity is first and foremost concretized in creative action. One of the most promising ways to explore serendipity is to study the phenomenon empirically in organizational contexts, where the various aspects are clearly visible and observable. In this way research on serendipity will have a genuine impact on the development of the media industry, media organizations and media management practices.

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