



## ‘Working through paradoxes’: the dynamic of texts and talks during the Darwin Expedition

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### **WORKING PAPER**

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## **“Working through” paradoxes: The dynamics of texts and talks during the Darwin Expedition**

### **Introduction**

Finally brought to the screen after two decades of trials and tribulations, the film by Terry Gilliam "The Man Who Killed Don Quixote" successfully engages in a perspective reversal. The young cynical producer gradually embodies the Sancho Panza role of the old shoemaker who had played Don Quixote in the film he had been shooting for many years prior. For its part, the film "The Secret Cordillera" also manages a role reversal. It comically relates the myriad dramas and misadventures experienced by members of the "Darwin's Dream" expedition, whose goal was to complete the 1<sup>st</sup>-ever crossing of the Darwin Cordillera in Patagonia. This film turns the conventional mountaineering film, characterized by seamless and linear storytelling, completely on its head.

From the outset, even the title "Darwin's Dream" places the expedition in a state of tension by virtue of its intentional ambiguity. Is Darwin dreaming, or are the expedition members dreaming about Darwin? All the action takes place as if the members were being overshadowed by Darwin and then by the Cordillera that Darwin had "dreamed" of during his travels to Patagonia. Moreover, expedition leaders had chosen this name in contrast with Hubert Sauper's documentary film released in 2004 entitled "Darwin's Nightmare", which presents what the producer calls the "Darwin paradox" (after a predator was introduced into Lake Victoria, the lake today is very productive from a biological perspective despite its poor ecological condition). The title "Darwin's Dream" celebrates the force of life while exorcising any evil spirits that might arise due to the force of natural elements during the expedition. As Jarzabkowski and Lê (2017) stated in such cases, this title offered a humoristic way of handling the fundamental paradox between life and death that characterizes all risky contexts.

An expedition is intrinsically a connection between time and space: its aim is to traverse a certain distance within a certain lapse of time. In every expedition in risky environments, team members must cope with fundamental underlying tensions: between life and death, between living an adventure and telling the story after the fact, between collective and individual goals. In the Darwin Expedition, tensions and contradictions were intense and persisted over time.

In previous works, we had explored the temporal and spatial constitution tensions and contradictions arising in the Darwin Expedition, particularly how specific objects and artefacts (the boat and the camera) materialized their temporary resolution or opening (Musca, Rouleau, Mellet, Sitri and de Vogüé, 2016). We argued that this process happens through texts and conversations in a very unique way: discourses are attached to speech genres that are then temporally and spatially organized through what we called "material chronotopes" (Musca, Rouleau, Mellet, Sitri and de Vogüé, *Forthcoming*), relying on Bakhtin's (1981) theory of chronotopes. We had not however investigated the detailed discursive practices through which actors deal with tensions and contradictions throughout the Darwin Expedition. The aim of this paper is to further understand these paradoxical dynamics through a close examination of the micro-discursive practices at work in the texts and conversations produced by team members as the expedition unfolds.

To properly perform this task, we assembled an interdisciplinary team of researchers from the fields of management and linguistics. We conducted both an ethnographic study of how tensions and contradictions arose and evolved during the expedition, and a linguistic and discursive study of how they were formulated, accommodated and transformed into texts (logbook) and conversations.

This paper will examine the speech genres applicable to these conversations and texts by focusing on the way the conversations and texts evolved over time, from one moment to the next, from one problem to another, and eventually from one speech genre to another. In so doing, we transition from structures to processes, i.e. from paradoxes to paradoxical dynamics, and from speech genres to speech genre elaborations and transformations, in line with a dynamic view of speech genre (Bakhtin, 1986).

### **Organizational tensions, contradictions and paradoxes**

Over the past few decades, interest has grown in the study of how organizations and organizational life are characterized by a set of contradictions, dualities and paradoxes (Jarzabkowski, Lê and Van de Ven, 2013; Langley and Sloan, 2011; Lewis and Smith, 2014; Michaud, 2014;; Putnam, Fairhurst and Banghart, 2016; Smith and Lewis, 2011). This stream of research has generally recognized that the three terms mentioned above all share the underlying premise of arising from

opposing forces responsible for causing discomfort and tensions in organizational life.

While the research on paradoxes has become widespread and even described as "pervasive" (Smith and Lewis, 2011), Putnam *et al.* (2016) proposed an alternative "constitutive view" that examines organizational contradictions, dialectics and paradoxes in the organizational process (Putnam *et al.*, 2016:66-67) and focuses on discourses and ongoing social interactions and activities rather than actors' cognition and large-scale systems. Tensions are defined as "stress, anxiety, discomfort or tightness in making choices and moving forward in organizational situations" (Fairhurst and Putnam, 2014). More broadly, "tension" is often used by scholars as a comprehensive term designating all paradoxical dynamics. Organizational actors may communicate about tensions as they experience them (Putnam *et al.*, 2016:68). Contradictions are "bipolar opposites that are mutually exclusive and interdependent such that the opposites define and potentially negate each other", while paradoxes are contradictions that persist over time and impose and reflect back on each other (Putnam *et al.*, 2016:75).

From a constitutive view, tensions and contradictions are rooted in ongoing actions and social interactions and hence are subject to competing interpretations. Analyzing discourses is thus central to understanding how tensions and contradictions develop and evolve over time (Putnam *et al.*, 2016:131). Our study will draw upon this approach. In the literature on tensions and paradoxes, researchers have identified four categories of organizational paradoxes defined and perceived as socially constructed (Jarzabkowski, Lê and Van de Ven, 2013; Lewis and Smith, 2014; Lüscher and Lewis, 2008; Smith and Lewis, 2011), namely: belonging, performance, organization, and learning. Tensions related to two of these paradox types seemed particularly interesting to explore in the context of project organization. The paradox of belonging relates to tensions and contradictions arising between the individual and the collective and moreover involves identity, values or roles. The paradox of performance surfaces whenever organizations deal with plurality and competing goals.

The practical approach to paradoxes (Bednarek *et al.*, 2017; Jarzabkowski and Lê, 2017) considers that paradoxes are multiple and interdependent, while being situated, constructed and enacted in actors' everyday practices. More specifically, these scholars highlight that paradoxes of performance and belonging might be not

independent but instead entangled (Bednarek *et al.*, 2017; Jarzabkowski *et al.*, 2013), thus inducing multiple and interconnected responses. The practical approach can help understand how organizational members experience complex, dynamic and entangled paradoxes, and especially how they "work through" paradoxes in their everyday doings and sayings and interactions. (Bednarek *et al.*, 2017; Jarzabkowski and Lê, 2017). According to this approach, Jarzabkowski and Lê (2017) explored how actors experience and respond to paradoxes through humor. Moreover, should the paradoxes be imposed contradictions persisting over time, then this does not necessarily mean that they constitute a fixed reality and hence may be resolved once and for all (Lüscher and Lewis, 2008). Paradoxes are basically inherent to the complexities found in man and the world man occupies. They form objects of thought that are flexible, transformable and dynamic. Actors can work through them in order to better cope with them and make sense of them. However, studies on the everyday practices through which actors deal with unfolding paradoxes in organizational life remain scarce. Specifically, these paradoxical dynamics could be investigated through language (Jarzabkowski, and Lê, 2017; Lewis, 2000, Michaud, 2013). Recent studies thereby focused on rhetoric as a specific form of language enabling to work through paradoxes (Bednarek, Paroutis & Sillince, 2016; Sillince J.A., B. Golant, 2017). Consequently, studying texts and conversations produced by organizational members could improve exploration of these paradoxical dynamics (Lewis, 2000; Michaud, 2013). Yet few studies to date have explored the micro-discursive practices through which actors experience paradoxes continuously unfolding both in the moment and over time.

The present paper serves as an attempt to fill this gap by examining how paradoxical dynamics are rooted in actors' micro-discursive practices aimed at experiencing, constructing and transforming such paradoxes immediately and over time. It seeks to answer the following question: *How do actors deal with tensions, contradictions and paradoxes throughout project organizing?* We intend to answer this question by focusing on the micro-discursive practices of team members working through paradoxical tensions during the Darwin mountaineering expedition.

## Methods

To examine how tensions and contradictions arise and evolve over time and how actors deal with them, we have drawn from the case study of a French, non-commercial mountaineering expedition, the "Darwin Expedition" ([www.projet-darwin.com](http://www.projet-darwin.com)). This expedition was chosen for a number of reasons. First of all, a mountaineering activity constitutes an "extreme" case study (Yin, 2003) that provides the opportunity to observe a unique phenomenon longitudinally, due to its short duration. Second, an expedition involves a temporary organization (Hällgren, 2007), during which members must cope with divergent goals (including performing a specific task, i.e. crossing a certain space within a predefined time frame, while ensuring the group's safety). Third, this expedition took place in an extreme context (Hallgren et al., 2018) in which paradoxical tensions were likely to arise. In addition, it features a truly limited spatio-temporal scope, i.e. a team operating for a predefined six-week period within a confined setting (at various base camps and in unexplored mountains), thus facilitating the observation of tensions between individual and collective levels, and across diverse identities, values and roles.

Data were collected throughout all expedition phases (preparatory - autumn 2008 to summer 2009, the expedition itself - autumn 2009, and post-expedition - extending until 2011), by combining a longitudinal study with a real-time, *in situ* ethnographic study covering all times of the six-week expedition phase (Van Maanen, 2006, 2011; Rasche and Chia, 2009; Yanow, 2009). The researchers (including the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> authors of this paper) were most of the time housed with the alpinists at the various base camps and could directly observe their day-to-day actions and interactions, in addition to taking part in some team activities. The data consist of: maps, planning missions, email messages, interviews with the alpinists (40+ hours), recorded interactions (90+ hours), videos (80+ hours), a logbook (website), alpinists' and researchers' logs, photographs, meeting notes and records, direct observations, and participant observations. This ethnographic study provides a unique opportunity to capture the ongoing micro-level, day-to-day interactions between team members, as well as the broader social context in which these interactions are taking place. Both before and after the expedition, focused semi-structured interviews and observations served as the preferred means of data collection. During all three phases, a variety of documents relative to the Darwin Expedition were gathered in order to complete the dataset.

Puzzled by the manner in which tensions were being constituted and accommodated over the course of the expedition, we intended to further explore how team members worked through them by employing an abductive approach (Cunliffe and Eriksen, 2011). We conducted both an ethnographic study of how tensions and contradictions arose and evolved during the expedition, and a linguistic and discursive study of how they were formulated, accommodated and transformed into texts (logbook) and conversations. We first reviewed transcripts of the audio-recorded conversations between team members, interviews and logbook entries completed with our field notes and other collected data. We then compiled a database of conversation entries (> 2,000 pages). A qualitative linguistic and discursive analysis of the numerous texts and discourses produced during the expedition was conducted, namely the texts written in the logbook and the audio-recorded conversations between team members.

As opposed to a single content analysis, our linguistic approach considers herein that discourse is not transparent and moreover that each linguistic form conveys a particular significance, which can never be equivalent to that conveyed by another form. We thus pay special attention to repetitions or regularities first and then to the emergence of new forms that successfully illustrate the dynamism of the discourse, in relation to project evolution.

More precisely, discourse analysis sheds light on the direct correlation existing between linguistic and discursive forms **as well as** on the context in which these forms appear. In the case of the Darwin Expedition, if all contextual components are assumed to constrain and determine the forms and facilitate their emergence, then some of them may play a prominent role. Such is the space represented by the boat, where the conversations are held and the texts written, with this space being both confined and collective, but also a moving space, open onto the outside world. Such is also the complex temporality of the expedition, both oriented towards a goal (crossing the Cordillera mountains) and subject to unknown events, which are sought after and dreaded at the same time. The delicate balance between what is expected and what is happening is therefore occurring extremely frequently and materialized in specific linguistic configurations, such as the opposition between the present perfect and present tenses or the concessive structure.

We have indeed analyzed various kinds of forms, whether syntactic structures, e.g. concession or passive voice, verbal tenses like the present or present perfect (see



Benveniste (1970/2014)), reformulation markers such as "that would mean", but also broader textual configurations, as in the various narrative modes observed in the logbook. These forms are not analysed independently of the speech genres in which they appear. In fact, in accordance with Bakhtin, we pay considerable attention to the category of speech genre. Citing Bakhtin, speech genres are defined as: "*relatively stable types of [...] utterances*" (Bakhtin, 1986:60), developed through social spheres of activity and therefore associated with a specific social function. Speech genres can thus be considered as key to understanding how significations arise and develop within social groups. We analyze the logbook as a speech genre, characterized by a particular structuration of time and space and a particular way of resolving the contradictory tensions among expedition team members. Since this structuration is intrinsically related to the boat, we assume that during the first part of the expedition, the boat can be considered as a chronotope for the logbook speech genre. We have also sought to describe the features of the conversations engaged in by the participants and transcribed by the researchers, as a hybrid oral genre between spontaneous interactions among friends and action-oriented discussions. We have thus been able to highlight the linguistic processes that enable making decisions or enacting them and building new frames.

## The Darwin Expedition

The objective of the "Darwin Expedition" was to achieve the first-ever crossing of the Cordillera Darwin range in Patagonia (some 150 km long), one of the last unexplored areas of the world, located west of the Tierra del Fuego Great Island and very close to Cape Horn (Musca, Rouleau and Fauré, 2014). No detailed maps or GPS data for this region had ever been produced. Complex technical difficulties, combined with highly hostile climatic conditions (winds exceeding 150 km/h), had prevented previous expeditions from completing the crossing. Alongside the objective of traversing the Cordillera Darwin, a cameraman specialized in adventure filming was on hand for a shoot that would help finance the expedition and serve as a promotional document for the French mountaineering industry.

Following the preparatory phase (September 2008 - September 2009), the expedition phase (September - November 2009) comprised four main periods and involved a team of 18 professionals (10 highly-qualified guides and alpinists, the support crew

on the Nueva Galicia boat used as the base camp, a cameraman, a webmaster and a local guide, plus 4 researchers working in pairs). The alpinists initially planned to reach the Cordillera by boat after a 36-hour ride and cross the ridge from west to east, in order to initiate the crossing over its most accessible section, thus offering possible backup routes or supply routes, and then progressing with the prevailing winds at their back. The Nueva Galicia boat was supposed to serve as an itinerant base camp throughout the expedition. From the outset however, the expedition deviated substantially from its original plan.

## Findings

### ***1. An expedition rife with tensions and contradictions***

Let's now provide a brief overview of how the main tensions arose and evolved over the course of this expedition. The specific tensions manifested are inherent to this type of project, which entails a mountaineering expedition, an first-ever feat, an adventure among friends and a scientific project, given the presence of researchers observing the events, all at the same time. Moreover, the expedition was supposed to provide the backdrop for a film, a blog (the logbook) and various reports.

These tensions constitute contradictory, yet interrelated, elements that persisted throughout the expedition; as such, they are constitutive of paradoxes (Smith and Lewis, 2011). We initially identified a set of contradictions related to the execution of different activities, as regards the multiple and competing project goals (i.e. the paradox of performance). We then identified a set of contradictions related to the fact that individual team members embody various identities and roles and belong to diverse groups and professions, while also being part of the same team and sharing responsibility for overall expedition success (the paradox of belonging).

#### *The paradox of performance*

The primary and explicit objective of the Darwin Expedition was to accomplish a feat, namely the first-ever crossing of the Darwin Cordillera. Yet this objective could not be dissociated from other more or less explicit goals that were every bit as pressing from the time of expedition organization and moreover that influenced its execution. The achievement of the first-ever crossing of the Cordillera mountain range, especially one in such a particularly hostile and extreme environment, already features a high

level of inherent risk with vital issues at stake, such as ensuring survivability. This project layout implied the ability to face every danger and potential mishap (storm, accidents, etc.) while overseeing group safety. In addition, the mission called for producing a film that would provide access to a major source of expedition financing. Film production however takes time and requires carrying heavy cumbersome equipment, which is not easily reconciled with the objective of a first-time accomplishment (with speed being of the essence, as each extra gram further burdens, tires and threatens survivability).

Beyond this initial goal, the expedition included other objectives stated with varying degrees of explicitness. One such objective was basically to experience an extraordinary adventure among friends "at the other end of the world". Though at first glance not appearing to be contradictory with a first-time achievement, this objective did generate, over the course of the expedition, tensions between competing choices (i.e. advancing in the Cordillera vs. meeting up with the other group). Moreover, the team member scientists and planned project set-up (with the boat serving as a base camp) were intended to enable conducting research without slowing the alpinists' progress. The idled boat however, combined with myriad mishaps, showcased over the succession of project stages the contradiction existing between sporting exploit and scientific quest. More broadly, the focus was placed not only on experiencing an extraordinary adventure but also on generating exposure: sharing it, via a blog aimed at a wide-ranging audience including family, friends, schoolchildren and scientists; filming it (through use of a camera); etc. It can be shown that these two distinct goals, i.e. experiencing adventure and then sharing it, create the potential for contradiction.

This multiplicity of objectives implied managing several activities and several rationales all at once. Given the sequencing of this expedition, an additional contradiction would wind up shaping the entire story, namely between the need to advance on the one hand and the reality of the impasse on the other.

Such is the paradox of performance as regards this particular expedition: it drew forth a set of multiple tensions that became mutually contradictory and persisted over the entire expedition.

### *The paradox of belonging*

Regarding the paradox of belonging, tensions arose from the outset between individuals with their own and potentially discordant identities, values and roles on

the one hand, and the team as a collective entity on the other. These tensions transformed into full-blown contradictions, which then magnified and persisted throughout the expedition. Opposed herein were the necessity to achieve the feat collectively, while dividing the group into different sub-teams dedicated to different sub-goals, and the existence of significant differences among team members: differences exposed between alpinists, leaders, researchers, cameramen, the webmaster, women, men, sailors, locals, and family members.

*Two intertwined paradoxes, embedded into a single overarching paradox of "doing vs. telling"*

It is apparent then that the two paradoxes, performance and belonging, could not in fact be dissociated: the differentiations between expedition members, which formed divisions in the group, were intrinsically correlated with their function in the overall project. Depending on their identity and status, members to a certain extent were therefore being included in a "subproject", whether an alpinist, sailor, researcher or webmaster. As demonstrated in the following sections, these paradoxical tensions shaped both texts and conversations. More specifically, the explicit function of the logbook was to tell the expedition story, an account also intended to be told via the film medium, which assumed lugging around a camera, an issue that raised considerable concern during conversations due to the various logistical problems inherent in such an object. The adventure being lived thus doubled as the storyboard of this same adventure, by injecting a dual linguistic-cinematographic texture, yielding the emergence of a new paradox, i.e. doing vs. telling. The path to resolving this paradox entailed developing objects that were semiotic, dynamic and modular, a logbook on the one hand and a produced film on the other. These objects, constrained by a typology standard, were nonetheless completely adapted to the situation at hand.

## ***2. Working through the paradoxes in both texts and conversations***

Let's now highlight how team members dealt with the tensions and contradictions that arose and persisted during the expedition through examining the discursive micro-practices operating in the logbook and conversations. We'll show how these micro-practices reveal, process and modify the tensions and contradictions that gave rise to the expedition's various paradoxes.

### *Formulating the paradoxes in the logbook*

The logbook was intended to share adventures with those readers closely monitoring the expedition blog for updates. This initial and primary function entailed narrating what was happening, describing the natural environs and transcribing the emotions felt by team members.

As regards the paradox of performance, the logbook made abundantly clear the intricate tensions existing between the various temporal and spatial frames, which we have respectively named: "Project", "Mishap" and "Leisure" (Musca *et al.*, *forthcoming*). "Project time" is characterized by a beginning, a goal, and a space oriented towards this goal (here, the Cordillera to cross). "Mishap time" is based on the unexpected and focuses on what is occurring at a specific point in time, and corresponds to a discontinuous and unorganized space (eg the space of the ocean during a storm, or a rugged glacier with its spiky pillars). Lastly, "Leisure time" is more stabilized and associated with the duration of leisure periods throughout the expedition; this third frame is assumed to elapse continuously, with no real finality or interruption, a continuous space, not oriented.

Excerpts 1 and 2 highlight the juxtaposition of two kinds of writing, corresponding to two temporalities, i.e. "Project" and "Mishap":

(1) *We're testing the communication equipment, Bgan the antenna, Iridum phones, while (Webmaster) is finalizing the latest website developments. Briançon, Les Vigneaux, Paris<sup>1</sup> are all far away, 13,280 km to the northeast, but we're looking in the opposite direction, 100 km to the southwest, on this Mount Sarmiento, which shines brightly all day long, beacon of the Darwin Cordillera attracting our impatient eyes.* (Logbook, Day 1)

(2) *Today's the right day, but hopes have been abruptly dashed, because it was quickly perceived that the boat was turning around.* (Logbook, Day 9)

In (1), the expedition members (*we, Webmaster*) are represented in action, with many present progressive tenses (*are testing, is finalizing, are looking*). Their action is focused on the Cordillera, represented by Mount Sarmiento that they have already reached... with their eyes (*attracting our impatient eyes*). Conversely, in (2), we witness ongoing events deciding the team's fate, corresponding to a very particular syntax using the passive voice (*have been dashed, was perceived*) and impersonal forms (*it*), as well as to very specific tense markers revealing this abrupt

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<sup>1</sup> These towns are home to a majority of team members. Names anonymized.

contrast between prospective (*today*) and resulting present perfect (*have been dashed*). These constructions, plus the juxtaposition of different kinds of writing as illustrated by (1) and (2), clearly reflect the tensions we have demonstrated to be inherent to this project.

The paradox of belonging has moreover been formulated in the very composition of the logbook text, through this tension present between group and individual. A transcription step typically presumes a point of view that builds the narrative and description by means of a single voice. While the story is being told as a group account, through use of a collective "we" encompassing all expedition members, still some singular perspectives do get interspersed, as either a complement or in order to draw a contrast, as revealed in the following excerpts.

### ***(3) Monday Day 9***

*3 am, (Alpinist 8) known for his tact woke me up: "(Leader) it's 3 in the morning, we need to call Michel for the weather report". In fact, I hadn't even fallen asleep. [...] Leader*

### ***(4) Tuesday Day 10***

*[...] Around 6:30 pm, Captain Ernesto returned from Punta Arenas with news from our 3 colleagues who had set out to look for a way to cross the Strait of Magellan. He informed us that (Leader) had decided to set sail tomorrow on the Bahia Azul ferry. [...] (Webmaster)*

### ***The team log dispatched to Punta Arenas***

*We've returned to Punta Arenas, our multiple attempts to cross the Strait having failed as winds of 45 knots and 5-meter high waves stifled our progress. Yesterday with Guillermo, (Leader) and (Alpinist 8), we found passage aboard the Bahia Azul, the boat offering weekly service to Puerto Williams via the southern bank of the Beagle Canal.*

*[...] Alpinist 1*

Moreover, let's note that the photographs and their captions personally named the expedition members, with these captions often highlighting a distinctive personal trait, whether permanent or one-time, tied to the individual's role in the mission.

(5)[Captain-Ernesto.jpg]

*Ernesto, Captain of the Nueva Galicia*

[Dom-pc.jpg]

*(Second-in-command), concentrating on studying the maps*

As opposed to other narrative genres, the logbook authorizes and facilitates this potential outlet of vocal expression, whether collective or individual, without undermining confidence in the author's words. Moreover, it incorporates the voices and different authors' perspectives without ever requiring a synopsis. The particular line of narration alone is sufficient to string the entries together with unity and consistency.

### *Reformulating and accommodating paradoxes in conversations*

The conversations held by expedition members, as recorded and transcribed by the researchers, despite being spontaneous and taking place within a friendly backdrop, are still oriented toward action and decision-making. Conversations thus dealt with the tensions inherent to the project reconfigurations that occurred throughout the expedition (since the alpinists were unable to achieve their primary objective of crossing the Cordillera and accomplishing a number of "first-ever" climbs). Our analysis shows that various linguistic and discursive micro-practices were at work allowing participants to formulate, enact and then accept a given project change. Such micro-practices are mainly repetition, redirection (transitioning from one topic to another, especially from "who" to "what") and reformulation. For now, let's focus on reformulation. Such a step, which frequently occurs during verbal exchanges, actually plays a key role in conversations in a project-related context. We have identified reformulation by the presence of explicit markers, such as "that is to say / that would mean", whose primary function is to establish equivalence between two terms that semantically may be quite distinct.

In the following example, reformulation is introduced by an abrupt division in the group, as the cameraman is not being counted as a teammate, given his status as external to the climbing project. This situation simultaneously activates the two paradoxes of performance and belonging.

In excerpt 6, the reformulation explicitly marked by "that would mean" leads the members from "who will leave or stay on the boat" to "what items they would have to take", and then to formulating that the frame of the expedition was in the process of changing to a "Himalayan type of expedition". From a linguistic point of view, a form like "that would mean" makes an explicit link between two formulations, presenting the second as an equivalent of the first, even though they correspond to very

different content. This form can thus be considered as a helpful tool in progressing the discourse from one point of view to another, from one topic to another.

*(6) Second-in-command*

*So, that completely alters the nature of the... of the crossing. Completely!*

*Alpinist 2*

*Absolutely.*

*Second-in-command*

*That would mean that we're in for a heavy-duty, Himalayan expedition moving against the wind. (Conversation, Day 10)*

Reformulations using *that means*, which bridge two propositional contents potentially quite different, play a crucial role in reframing the project. In (7) below, the reformulation has the effect of abruptly dividing the group. The “cameraman” is not accounted for as a person, because of his status outside of the main goal of the crossing. The two paradoxes of performance and belonging are intertwined at the same time.

*(7) Alpinist 2*

*There are three people, including a cameraman, so that means really two people.*

*Alpinist 3*

*Hmm hmm.*

*Alpinist 2*

*That's really pushing it, just two people for...*

Paradoxical tensions related to performance and belonging do indeed overlap since the discussion on project reorganization also entailed a discussion on separating individuals spatially depending on their status and role (8).

*(8) Second-in-command*

*... and this idea of assistance from the boat, with its connection points, as long as it's not actually here, this idea should be completely dropped.*

*Alpinist 2*

*Drop the possibility for... assistance?*

*Second-in-command*

*Yes. Our assistance as the second Team as well, because there won't be any second Team.*

*Another itinerary would be needed.*

*Alpinist 2*

*Yes, sure thing.*

*Dom*

*There will only be one team on the same itinerary.*

*Pinpin*

*Right.*

*Second-in-command*

*So that's what it would mean. (Conversation, Day 10)*



This micro-practice of reformulation facilitates the way team members "work through" paradoxical tensions and accommodate them by reconfiguring new links between Project and Mishap temporalities, as well as between the collective and the individual. By means of conversation therefore, the project is being reframed. In this instance, "working through" paradoxes do not imply that team members have been able to resolve the tensions existing between two opposite stances, but merely that the team has rearranged the meaning behind these tensions and accepted this new meaning.

### **3. Living an adventure vs. telling a story about it**

Not only do the texts and conversations shape the paradoxes of performance and belonging, but they transform and fuel them. In actuality, texts and conversations are themselves embedded in a paradox that constitutes the language used (experiencing or narrating) and that, more pointedly, constitutes the set of semiotic objects that can be created in order to depict reality. In the specific case of the Darwin Expedition, the tension between living the expedition or constructing a representative artefact, which to some extent is designed as a substitute for the actual expedition, is particularly acute, especially given that producing a film and promoting a blog were in fact explicitly identified as objectives of the overall project.

In both cases (film and blog), semiotic objects are involved, in conjunction with distinct material content specifically established through overcoming constraints of various types. A study of these constraints yields an understanding of how such semiotic objects are crafted and paradoxically operate, and how they actually "work through" the paradoxes of belonging and performance.

#### *Discursive genre constraints within the dynamic of paradoxes*

##### *The logbook*

Posts are made to the logbook on a daily, or nearly daily, basis first as collective entries and then with more individualized input by the webmaster alone. They are then published on the expedition site in the form of a blog. The primary narrative focus of these posts is apparent in a rather unique format, namely back-and-forth narration, which juxtaposes the recounting of events that have just occurred with the anticipation of upcoming events. Each type of narration presupposes a prioritization of events, in both their chronology and storytelling style, with the options selected

being mainly dictated by real and imagined recipients (families, friends, schoolchildren, sponsors, etc.). As such, the logbook produces a reorganization of events that instills them with meaning; it weaves events into a narrative frame like in the telling of all stories, yet through this use of back-and-forth narration, in accepting to question on any given day the event organization choices from the day before. The outcome offers a single-meaning construction that zeroes in on the human aspect of the experience. This reorganization is also applicable to the other two goals, namely describing the surroundings and sharing emotions, both tied to broader temporalities that encompass the actual logbook entry. This system of blog posts however also serves as a link, throughout the entire unique experience, to a tangible protocol of updating the logbook via the online expedition blog. Such a step implies overcoming technical constraints: a computer and Internet connection are needed to send the texts, which in turn are being read as they are published and not afterwards, i.e. once the expedition is over. This characteristic will have consequences on the hybrid nature of the text, as will be discovered below.

### *The camera*

As shown in our previous paper (Musca *et al.*, 2016), the camera serves as a critical object in terms of generating paradoxical tensions within the project setting. The tension existing between the goal of crossing the Cordillera and that of producing a film on this crossing using a heavy professional camera actually became more intense as the expedition unfolded, even though the film had to be made in order to finance a sizable portion of the expedition.

From a logistics standpoint, producing a film in mountainous terrain required, among other things, a professional camera, a cameraman, a camera transporter and video equipment, along with alpinists capable of ensuring safety while carrying their own supplies (food, sleeping bags, etc.).

*(9) And then if we're looking at it from more of a technical angle, (the cameraman) won't be able to come. He'll need to hand the camera over to someone else, right. (Conversation, Day 24)*

Viewed from this perspective, the camera impedes performance: it's heavy, slows progress and could potentially bring the expedition to a halt; moreover, it takes up the space reserved for food, thus creating a survival risk:

*(10) I'm afraid that if we get too greedy, if we want to lug all this stuff, nothing will be accomplished. (Conversation, Day 24)*

*(11) A camera is heavy, right. A single camera weighs the same as 4 lyophs, right*  
(Conversation, morning of Day 9)

Moreover, the camera has the effect of dividing the group between who's doing the filming and those being filmed. Along the same lines, the narration posted in the logbook fleshes out events to be viewed from a certain angle, just as the camera selects the reality by its unique way of framing.

Like the logbook, the camera will thus produce an image of reality, despite the widely-known impossibility of achieving a first-ever feat while filming it at the same time: a climb cannot be simultaneously undertaken and filmed. The climb therefore has to be staged.

*(12) Because two things are going on: acting in front of the camera and then actually performing what's been intended. (...)* (Conversation, Day 24)

And the film itself will naturally be the product of a selection and re-composition of the daily rushes, by means of film-editing. The semiotic objects portrayed by the logbook and film may be analyzed as materially constrained systems that participate, due to the very existence of these constraints, in building paradoxes, of both belonging and performance, and then allowing for such paradoxes to be properly expressed.

The perspective and framing inherent herein contributes to setting up the paradox of belonging, by virtue of inducing differentiation between the group and individual members, between the narrator and the subject of narration, and lastly between the cameraman and the film subjects. The paradox of performance intertwines the various temporal project frames, namely "Mishap" and "Leisure", appearing as consubstantial with the generic functionalities of both the logbook and documentary. In both cases, use of the narrative voice, which is intended to "report" on what is happening or has happened (i.e. tension between the project and unforeseen events arising) is compounded by a purely descriptive mechanism tied to the enjoyment felt by expedition members during this moment suspended in time devoid of day-to-day constraints. Members are then projected into a natural setting that piques their admiration. Despite being subjected to constraints, these systems remain quite flexible as they evolve in sync with team members' efforts to reframe the expedition in coping with these underlying paradoxical tensions.

### *A dynamic process of transformation*

The main reframing step consisted of dividing the expedition goals into various sub-goals and, in so doing, dividing the team into various sub-teams, each one assigned a specific goal. These changes wound up affecting the logbook structure.

During the first part of the expedition, all members were assembled together in the boat: they gathered in the same place to discuss and write the logbook entries, which can thus be described as the product of a collaborative writing process. At that time, the project was a collective one, identified as crossing the Cordillera. But given the impossibility of traversing the strait to reach what should have been the departure point of the crossing, the plan had to be changed and the collective divided (Musca *et al.*, *Forthcoming*). Several sub-projects then appeared: certain members (the alpinists) would attempt to cross the Cordillera by proceeding in two groups, while the remaining members would stay in a lodge, subsequently board the Nueva Galicia and later on Marcel's boat to explore Cape Horn, in accomplishing another assigned project, this one more touristic in nature.

From that time forward, the format of the texts posted on the website changed: the main text, written by a single person (the webmaster), consisted of his entry plus what was being recounted by the other two groups of alpinists, as dictated by phone once they were able to communicate with one another. The main text, still called a "logbook", thus included other writings, signed by other expedition members and entitled "summary", "account" or "narrative", with a date perhaps different from that of the main text. From Day 33 to Day 36, even the "main text" was no longer appearing, but simply a juxtaposition of "account from team 1", "account from team 2" and "account from team 3". Then, from Day 36 on, once again a structure can be detected featuring a main text and including what is designated as "dictated narratives". This situation led to a sort of text rupture, correlated with both a spatial break (with each group situated in a different place) and a temporal interruption.

Moreover, the text style itself was evolving: the kind of utterances analyzed in excerpt (2) less present, descriptions of countryside nature and stories more prevalent.

Everything therefore points to these texts being split between various genres:

- The logbook genre, which seeks like in the merchant marines to issue an official report of what is happening from a legal perspective;

- The "expedition story" genre, which seeks like in books previously read to relate adventures in an unexplored country and archive the story for posterity;
- Plus possibly the "tourist blog" genre, now available on the Internet, whereby world travelers share photos, information and tips about the countries they're visiting.

The generic identity of the first part of the text produced during the expedition was obviously linked to the Nueva Galicia boat, but given that the project had changed and the Nueva Galicia no longer fulfilling its function, logbook entries had to change as well. This transformation of the logbook layout was tied to the larger number of boats. When the Nueva Galicia was idled, team members mobilized other boats, which in turn served to temporarily unblock the project. They first boarded a cargo ship to cross the Strait of Magellan and reach the Cordillera. Then, once the Nueva Galicia was beached after its strained and ultimately successful strait crossing, the Marcel sailboat allowed them to achieve the project of discovering Patagonia and its inhabitants.

In conjunction with these breakthroughs, the number of cameras deployed also rose, transforming the nature of the film project. The large, high-quality yet cumbersome professional camcorder, initially intended to shoot the film, was now accompanied by a series of cameras: a second professional camera of lower quality although more manageable in weight (assigned to one of the alpinists), and additional basic cameras and smaller devices carried by the researchers and alpinists.

Many discussions were held regarding these various cameras (smaller, in greater number) in the conversations (excerpts (13), (14) and (15)).

(13) Alpinist 3

*But wait, if he takes his backup camera, you're not going to take yours, right.*  
(Conversation, Day 13)

(14) Alpinist 3

*(Alpinist 1) won't be able to come. He'll need to hand his camera over to someone else, okay ...No, but the lightweight camera, not the big one.*

Alpinist 2

*Yeah, yeah* (Conversation, Day 24)

(15) Alpinist 3

*The two cameras must be separated. Separate them, yes indeed. I'll take a camera.*  
(Conversation, Day 36)

As such, these other cameras actually helped resolve the paradoxical tensions gripping the project. Once the initially planned feat, i.e. Cordillera crossing, had been

deemed impossible, intense discussions were held regarding the range of possible films to make. During the final period, some members left with the large camcorder on the sailboat to Cape Horn in order to "salvage the film", while others headed out to explore a distant zone of the Cordillera with the small camera, at the same time that researchers were filming with their own video equipment. The move from one camera to several, each accompanying a subgroup, also therefore proved to be significant for the entire project, which wound up being divided into a number of alternative sub-projects.

## **Conclusion**

Our study has explored the micro-discursive practices through which actors experience the paradoxical tensions that are continuously unfolding throughout an expedition project and moreover helps us understand their dynamics. Actors do not respond to such tensions either easily or definitively. Our analyses of the Darwin Expedition demonstrate that a long and difficult process is actually at work herein, which involves the creation of new semiotic objects. Combining a linguistic study with an ethnographic study of the Darwin Expedition has allowed us to investigate how tensions are formulated, reformulated and ultimately transformed through actors' discourses, not only in the specific moment but also over all six weeks of the expedition duration. In so doing, we're receptive to Jarzabkowski et al.(2018) insistence on taking Lewis (2000: 761) seriously: "Rather than a linear progression marked by a distinct endpoint or resolution, exploring paradox is an ongoing and cyclical journey".

We contribute to illuminating interactions between the organizational paradoxes of performance and belonging, which do not exist and evolve independently of one another. Quite to the contrary, we first found that paradoxes of performance and belonging are intertwined, which corroborates the findings of Bednarek *et al.* (2017) and Jarzabkowski *et al.* (2013). Second, we highlighted that these paradoxes of performance and belonging are woven together with an overarching paradox, namely: living while telling the story of what you're living. More studies are needed to further investigate whether this new paradox emerges, interacts with other paradoxes and develops over time within other organizational settings.

One unexpected result of this investigation is the pluralized forms taken by the sub-projects distributed as the paradox of belonging plays out: pluralization of the boats, the cameras, as well as the projects themselves. Once again, the challenge herein is to collate all these sub-projects into a single whole, i.e. making just one expedition and one film. We did begin a study of the role of artefacts (Musca *et al.*, 2016) and material chronotopes in paradoxical dynamics (Musca *et al.*, 2018), but further investigation is required to gain a better understanding of these dynamics.

This paper has also contributed to bridging the divide between structures and processes. In fact, genres are the structures that organize discourses, while at the same time they are the processes being elaborated through these discourses. The paradoxes themselves are being transformed through the very same discourses. The goal is thus split into different sub-goals, filming takes the place of living an adventure, and the collective is divided into sub-teams. And all this is happening via the linguistic micro-processes of formulation and reformulation we described, as well as via evolution in the speech genres themselves.

From a methodological standpoint, our linguistic analysis has demonstrated both the intrinsically dynamic nature of a speech genre, in showing how the logbook gets transformed throughout the expedition, and the importance of taking into account not only sets of lexical items but also syntactic and discursive configurations. Our study has also highlighted the benefit of studying the linguistic and material constraints that convey meaning and not just content. For starters, such constructions are the first of their kind. Their study does not entail application of a pre-prepared grid, but rather analyzing how these constraints actually take shape. Telling a story gives meaning, in the very constraints that build the story. Next, new and unique objects are being created (derived from the interaction of multiple constraints). These newly-created objects infuse meaning into the situation, which each time assumes a different form.

Reality is not resolved, yet it can be put on hold to produce a work that gives it meaning through a temporary freeze frame reality (film, book, etc.), as suggested by Ricoeur (1983): "*The art of composing consists of distilling agreement from disagreement: the "one contingent on the other" thus prevails over the "one after the other"*" (52a 18-22). It's in real life that disagreement destroys agreement, but that's not how tragedies work (Ricoeur, 1983: 88).

Team members did not achieve what they had intended, yet they still wound up with a few accomplishments: even if they didn't cross the entire mountain range of the

Cordillera, they achieved 1<sup>st</sup>-ever ascends, discovered new routes and accesses that would be used by the military team of alpinists who finally succeeded in achieving the crossing of the Darwin Cordillera two years later. Moreover, the alpinists came back as friends, and the film's production and distribution assembled *ex post* the various team members and generated the expected financing. From a managerial point of view, our findings thus suggest that members, instead of trying to avoid paradoxes, or believing they can be resolved definitively, need to embrace paradoxes, to work through them. Telling a story complicates and deforms reality, but it does provide meaning to the tensions experienced, helps cope with them, both individually and collectively, and leads to progress.



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