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Etienne Capron, H el ene Delacour

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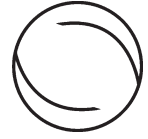
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# Field-Configuring Places: Unpacking the role of place in field evolution

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**Etienne Capron**   
Mosaic – HEC Montréal, Canada

**Hélène Delacour**   
University of Lorraine, France

## Abstract

The paper theorises how a place can influence the emergence and evolution of an exchange field. Specifically, we examine the Society for Arts and Technology building in Montreal, focusing on its geographical location, material form, and meanings as their adaptations over time. Our findings identify three types of influence that the SAT building has on the field of projection mapping: supporting the community, fostering interorganisational relationships, and catalysing innovation. These influences manifest in distinct ways depending on the field's evolution phase. We contribute to the literature on field configuration by developing the concept of the field-configuring place and distinguishing it from the established concept of the field-configuring event. Additionally, we extend the institutional dynamics literature by showing how a place can support the configuration of a field from its emergence, based on its characteristics that can be adapted while providing stability. This study thus underlines the cross-fertilisation between the literature on field configuration and that on places.

## Keywords

exchange field, field-configuring event, field-configuring place, place, projection mapping

## Introduction

What do Andy Warhol's Factory and the Bateau-Lavoir have in common for painting, the Santa Fe Institute and MIT's Building 20 for science, the Invention Factory and Weimar Bauhaus for industrial design? Because of the many collaborations that were undertaken, the numerous ideas that have been developed and the products that have been designed in these places, all of them have had a major influence in their respective exchange field, i.e., a field which "contains a focal population of actors and their interaction or exchange partners (suppliers, customers, etc.)" (Zietsma, Groenewegen, Logue, & Hinings, 2017, p. 396).

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### Corresponding author:

Etienne Capron, Mosaic – HEC Montréal, 3000, chemin de la Côte-Sainte-Catherine, Montréal QC H3T 2A7, Canada.  
Email: [etienne.capron@hec.ca](mailto:etienne.capron@hec.ca)

Despite numerous empirical examples, the organisational literature has largely overlooked the extent to which place can configure exchange fields characterised by interactions, the exchange of ideas, and the construction of shared meanings (Beckert, 2010; Reay & Hinings, 2005, 2009). However, two complementary streams of literature have indirectly paved the way for addressing this issue: research on field-configuring events (FCEs), a well-documented configuring mechanism (Meyer, Gaba, & Colwell, 2005; Lampel & Meyer, 2008), and the recent turn to “place” in institutional dynamics (Cartel, Kibler, & Dacin, 2022; Dacin et al., 2019; Dacin, Zilber, Cartel, & Kibler, 2024).

Field-configuring events are broadly defined as events that bring together different field members in a limited spatial and temporal setting, such as trade fairs (Moeran & Strandgaard Pedersen, 2011) or festivals (Rüling, 2011). The literature on FCEs has begun to consider the spatial settings in which these events take place. Scholars have shown how the spatial arrangements of an FCE itself can reveal and reinforce the hierarchical position of members in the field (e.g., Pallas, Grünberg, Edlund, & Raviola, 2024) and facilitate or constrain interactions and exchanges between members (Gross & Zilber, 2020; Schüßler, Rüling, & Wittneben, 2014). Taking a more geographical perspective, some scholars have also demonstrated the role of geographical location and the constitutive relationship between the region or city where the FCE is organised and the FCE itself (e.g., Glynn, 2008; Lange & Schüßler, 2018; Schüßler, Dobusch, & Wessel, 2014; Schüßler, Grabher, & Müller-Seitz, 2015).

While these studies pave the way for considering the influence of spatial settings on the emergence and evolution of an exchange field, the inherently temporary nature of FCEs limits further theoretical development. This limitation prompts a shift towards a more permanent spatial setting, specifically a place, aligning with the recent place-sensitive approach in organisational studies in general and research on institutional dynamics in particular (Cartel et al., 2022; Dacin et al., 2019, 2024). A place is characterised by its unique geographical location, specific material form, and meanings (Gieryn, 2000). Buildings, as a case in point, play a crucial role in both organisational and institutional maintenance (e.g., Dacin, Munir, & Tracey, 2010; Siebert, Wilson, & Hamilton, 2017; Wright, Meyer, Reay, & Staggs, 2021) as well as in fostering change (e.g., Staggs, Wright, & Jarvis, 2022; Wright, Irving, Zafar, & Reay, 2023). Adopting the recent dynamic perspective (Cartel et al., 2022; Dacin et al., 2024), places are indeed increasingly understood as both stable and dynamic entities. While they provide a “strong material anchor” (Monteiro & Nicolini, 2015, p. 4), the literature often explores how adaptations of one of a place’s characteristics can influence institutional dynamics (Gieryn, 2000; Jones, Lee, & Lee, 2019). For example, the redesign of the UK Parliamentary buildings has been interpreted both as a catalyst for change and as a means of resisting change to maintain the status quo (Siebert, 2024).

While insightful, the predominant focus in this literature on the influence of place on organisational and institutional maintenance and change, often examining only one characteristic at a time, has led to an under-theorisation of its role in the emergence and evolution of a field. We need a more comprehensive theoretical understanding that considers the stable and dynamic nature of a place, such as a building, and how its characteristics—geographical location, material form, and meanings—and their adaptation together influence the configuration of an exchange field. We thus propose the following research question: *How does a place influence the emergence and evolution of an exchange field?*

To address our research question, we examine the Society for Arts and Technology (SAT) building, a prominent cultural venue in Montreal, Canada, within the field of projection mapping. This field includes all members dedicated to projecting visual content onto surfaces such as facades or sculptures, using specialised software and projectors. Since its inception, the SAT building has undergone different adaptations in its geographical location, material form, and meanings,

significantly influencing the emergence and evolution of the field. Our study spans the period from 1996 to 2023 and reveals that the SAT building exerts three types of influence on the field: supporting the community, fostering interorganisational relationships, and catalysing innovation. These influences vary in degree and manner depending on the field's evolutionary phase.

Our research contributes to and extends the literature on field configuration of exchange fields and that on place in institutional dynamics in several ways. First, by theorising the role of place in field configuration, we develop the concept of a field-configuring place (FCP) and define it as a relatively permanent social and material venue, such as a building, that provides a unique setting in which diverse people and organisations can gather and interact on a long-term basis in order to build and support community, catalyse innovation, and develop shared meanings. Importantly, we discuss how FCPs can be characterised not only as distinct from, but also complementary to, the closely related concept of FCEs, leading us to further our understanding of their relationships. Second, we contribute to the literature on place in institutional dynamics by showing how a place can facilitate the emergence of a field, not just its maintenance or change. We show how the characteristics of a place and its adaptations support its dual nature, providing both stability and dynamism, thereby configuring the field.

## **Understanding the Role of Place in Configuring an Exchange Field**

As Zietsma et al. (2017) have called for, we aim to conduct research “about” exchange fields rather than “in” them, investigating the mechanisms that influence their emergence and evolution. The role of place has received limited attention since Glynn's (2008) seminal article on the impact of the Olympic Games on civic communities. Specifically, two complementary streams of literature have started to examine the influence of place in such a process: one considering the spatial setting of field-configuring events (FCEs) and another related to the more recent emphasis on place in institutional dynamics.

### *The role of field configuring events and their spatial settings*

FCEs are generally defined as temporary spatial “settings in which people from diverse organisations and with diverse purposes assemble periodically, or on a one-time basis, to announce new products, develop industry standards, construct social networks, recognise accomplishments, share and interpret information, and transact business” (Lampel & Meyer, 2008, p. 1026). They are diverse types of FCEs, including trade fairs (Moeran & Strandgaard Pedersen, 2011), conferences (Zilber, 2011), festivals (Rüling, 2011) and ceremonies (Anand & Jones, 2008), and their role is crucial for configuring a field (e.g., Meyer et al., 2005; Schübler, Rüling, & Wittneben, 2014). Indeed, the temporary nature of these events introduces a discontinuity into field evolution, which can be a trigger for its emergence, change, maintenance (Schübler & Sydow, 2012) or even decline, as in the case of DDT through regulations (Hardy & Maguire, 2010). In particular, scholars have demonstrated the influence of FCEs as facilitators for the emergence of a field through the organisation of a conference (Meyer et al., 2005), providing opportunities for the establishment of standards (Garud, 2008) and the development of shared meanings (Oliver & Montgomery, 2008). In parallel, Anand and Watson (2004) have demonstrated how award ceremonies, as FCEs, have influenced the evolution of the field of commercial music, while Leca, Rüling, and Puthod (2015) have examined how the Annecy International Animation Film Festival, which has managed to keep its strong field mandate, can contribute to the maintenance of the field of animated film.

Beyond the evidence of these events in the different phases of the field life cycle, there is a growing interest in further understanding the influence of the spatial setting of FCEs in this process

(Schübler et al., 2015). This involves examining both the spatial organisation of the event itself, and its geographical location, along with its relationship to the surrounding environment.

Some scholars, by considering the spatial organisation of an FCE, have examined how event organisers can facilitate interactions between participants and create opportunities for sensemaking through the design and spatial arrangement of the event (Gross & Zilber, 2020; Hardy & Maguire, 2010; Lampel & Meyer, 2008; Pallas et al., 2024; Zilber, 2011). By highlighting how some FCEs are deliberately staged with varying levels of interactional openness, and thus with differing opportunities for member exchanges, Schübler, Rüling, and Wittneben (2014) have explained why climate conferences have often failed to produce effective solutions to combat global warming.

Other scholars, adopting a more geographical perspective, have considered the influence of the specific geographic location (e.g., the city, the region) where an FCE is organised (Glynn, 2008; Lange & Schübler, 2018; Leca et al., 2015; Schübler et al., 2015; Sedini, 2011). The geographical context can provide an FCE with symbolic and economic resources, a reputation rooted in the region's history, and connections to local stakeholders. For example, in their study of the German popular music field, Schübler, Dobusch, and Wessel (2014) demonstrated the importance of regional embeddedness for an FCE, as it enables the linkage of local creative scenes to broader exchange fields.

Although these studies pave the way for understanding the role of the spatial setting of FCEs in the emergence and evolution of an exchange field, their temporary nature offers only a partial perspective and thus limits a more complete theorisation of their influence. Therefore, we complement this stream of research by considering a broader perspective on the role of place as a relatively permanent setting in the literature on institutional dynamics.

### *The role of place in institutional dynamics*

According to Gieryn (2000), a place is defined by the combination of its three characteristics: a geographical location that makes it a “unique spot in the universe” (Gieryn, 2000, p. 464); a specific material form, such as its size, lighting, layout, or available facilities (Jones & Massa, 2013; Leclair, 2023); and a set of meanings that are constituted by the actors who design or manage it, and by the actors who participate in it (Jones et al., 2019; Lawrence & Dover, 2015; Zilber, 2018). Place can be of diverse nature such as a city (Glynn, 2008; Phillips, 2011), a neighborhood (Jones et al., 2019), a street (Cnossen, de Vaujany, & Haefliger, 2021), or as in our case, a building (Jones & Massa, 2013; Siebert, 2024; Siebert et al., 2017).

In this place-sensitive approach (Cartel et al., 2022; Dacin et al., 2019, 2024), there is a growing convergence in highlighting the importance of place in institutional dynamics (e.g., Lawrence & Dover, 2015; Staggs et al., 2022; Wright et al., 2021) and how they can be mutually constitutive (Wright et al., 2023). Indeed, the role of place, such as a building, is particularly salient in supporting institutional maintenance (Dacin et al., 2010; Lawrence & Dover, 2015; Wright et al., 2021), as in the case of the parliament building supporting an old profession—the Scottish advocates (Siebert et al., 2017), as well as institutional change (for a review, see Wright et al., 2023). Staggs et al. (2022) have shown how the creation of new places has both shaped and been shaped by the institutional field of scientific research in Australia, being “both medium and outcome of entrepreneurship” (Staggs et al., 2022, p. 270) and thus supporting change. While the role of places in organisational and institutional maintenance and change is well established, we need more theoretical insights into how they influence the emergence and evolution of an exchange field, as some scholars have called for (Wright et al., 2021).

This seems to be all the more important as scholars have increasingly recognised the potential adaptability of place, particularly buildings (e.g., Boutinot & Delacour, 2022; Colombero &

Boxenbaum, 2019; Giovannoni & Quattrone, 2018; Wright et al., 2023). According to Cartel et al. (2022) and Dacin et al. (2024), a place can be both stable and dynamic simultaneously, allowing us to go beyond the traditional view of places as fixed (Fine, 2010), synonymous only with stability and permanence (Monteiro & Nicolini, 2015). While places are more permanent in the sense that they are “open-ended with regard to time horizon” (Bakker, DeFillippi, Schwab, & Sydow, 2016, p. 1708), adapting or altering one of their characteristics can influence institutional dynamics (Gieryn, 2000; Jones et al., 2019).

In terms of geographical location, relocating a place can both enable and constrain the activities that take place within it, as in the case of the relocation of the UK Parliament buildings (Siebert, 2024). In parallel, the material form of a building can be adapted to support organisational claims to legitimacy (de Vaujany & Vaast, 2014), mediate or complicate institutional work (Lawrence & Dover, 2015; Wright et al., 2021), encourage or mitigate interaction and collaboration (Irving, Ayoko, & Ashkanasy, 2020), or provide “raw material for creative social practice” (Cresswell, 2014, p. 39). Finally, by organising daily activities, places can support the construction of meanings (Dacin et al., 2010; Lawrence & Dover, 2015) or support the (re)definition of an institution through the choices made in terms of participation in art venues, as in the case of Venezuela’s art world (Rodner, Roulet, Kerrigan, & vom Lehn, 2020). Consequently, buildings are not just physical containers, but rather sites of action where different activities can occur and influence the configuration of a field (Lange & Schüßler, 2018).

To summarise, these two complementary streams of research have highlighted the influence of place on field evolution. However, the literature on FCEs provides a limited perspective by focusing on the role of places during temporary events, thus restricting the temporal scope of analysis. Concurrently, the literature on institutional dynamics presents a fragmented view, primarily examining the relationship between place and organisational or institutional maintenance and change, often focusing on one of its characteristics—be it geographical location, material form, or meanings. Addressing these limitations, this paper seeks to answer the following research question: *How does a place influence the emergence and evolution of an exchange field?* By systematically examining the three defining characteristics of a place and their adaptations, this study aims to enhance our understanding of the stable and dynamic nature of a place, and investigate how it can influence the emergence and evolution of an exchange field.

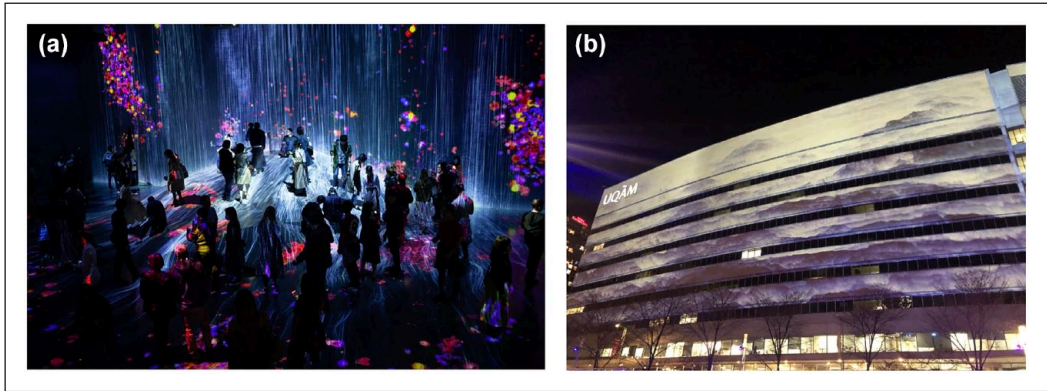
## Research Setting

To address our research question, we chose to examine the influence of a specific place, the Society for Arts and Technology (SAT) building, located in Montreal, Canada, in the field of projection mapping.

### *The field of projection mapping*

This field is defined by the practices, interactions, and shared meanings of the multiple members involved in the production and diffusion of projection mapping. Projection mapping is a digital creative practice that transforms the materiality of volumes, such as facades or sculptures, into projection surfaces for visual artworks. Using video projectors and specialised software, it involves distorting the projection surface, applying visual content specifically designed for it, and altering its perceived appearance. This practice is now increasingly used in immersive exhibitions (Figure 1).

Experiments with this new practice began in the late 1960s (e.g., in Disney theme parks) and continued throughout the 1980s, when more and more artists (e.g., Michael Naimark, Krzysztof Wodiczko, Hans-Walter Müller) began to use non-standard projection surfaces. The 1990s saw the



**Figure 1.** Projection mapping for immersive experience (a) (source: Karsten Gohm – Unsplash) and on building facades (b) (source: author).

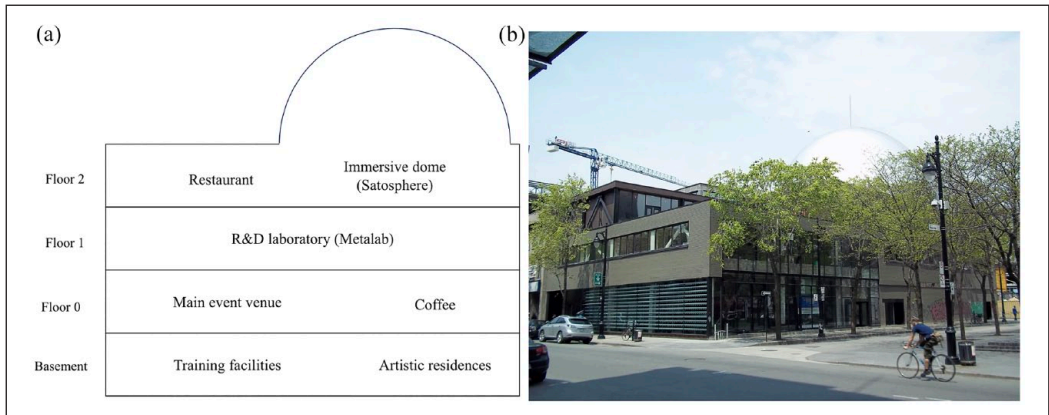
development of monumental projections on buildings and of VJing (the practice of “mixing” video streams during performances, as DJs do) in electronic music clubs. These various earlier experiments and the increased interactions between projection mapping creators, made possible in particular by the SAT, as we will see below, led to the gradual emergence of the projection mapping field in Montreal.

Projection mapping creators are now trained in digital arts in universities and schools that have developed specific programs (e.g., Bachelor in Interactive Media at UQAM) to learn the technical skills to create, animate, and project such content. They work as independent artists such as *susy. technology* or *Iregular*, or are hired by creative studios such as *Moment Factory* or *Thinkwell* to produce commercial projects. For instance, circus companies such as *Cirque du Soleil* use projection mapping in their shows. The field now comprises more than 150 studios of various sizes—from 5 to 400 employees—operating locally and in a global market (e.g., the illumination of the *Sagrada Familia* or of the *Burj Khalifa tower*), and generating an annual turnover of CAD\$188 million in Canada (XN Québec, 2023).

To create projection mapping, studios and artists work with companies that produce software such as *Vyv* and *Mapping Matter*, or they rent hardware (e.g., *Solotech*) adapted to the specificities of this new practice. Their creations are then sold and exhibited at projection mapping festivals (*Mapp\_MTL*, *Lumifest*, *Luminothérapie*), digital art festivals (*Mutek*, *Elektra*, *Chromatic*), immersive experience venues (*Oasis Immersion*), and digital art galleries (e.g., *Phi Center*, *Eastern Bloc*). These different venues are involved in disseminating this innovative practice, the aesthetic conventions and styles of the creators, shaping shared meanings and giving them a distinct collective identity. Having identified projection mapping as a promising field, public actors at the local, regional, and national levels have been involved in funding projection in public spaces (for example, in the *Quartier des Spectacles*, Montreal’s cultural neighborhood) and in supporting local organisations. Among them, the SAT has played a crucial role in the emergence and evolution of the field.

### *The Society for Arts and Technology*

The SAT is a specific building in Montreal belonging to the field of projection mapping. Following the International Symposium on Electronic Art (ISEA), a FCE held in Montreal in 1995 that



**Figure 2.** Graphical representation of the organisation of the SAT building (a) (source: own elaboration), and a picture of the building (b) (source: © Jean Gagnon/Wikimedia Commons/CC BY-SA 3.0).

brought together researchers and artists in the field of digital art, a group of local and motivated artists decided to create the SAT with the aim of gathering and stimulating a growing community of individuals around the innovative practice of projection mapping. Among the first members were Monique Savoie (co-founder and director of the SAT for 25 years), Luc Courchesne (co-founder, artist, and first director of the SAT's research and development laboratory), and Alain Mongeau (co-founder and then creator of Mutek, a world-renowned digital art and electronic music festival held annually in Montreal).

Since its inception in 1996, the SAT has been a non-profit organisation supporting the creation, dissemination, research, and training of projection mapping. The SAT now employs around 60 people. Although it has undergone several adaptations and relocations, the SAT's four-storey building is currently located in the Quartier des Spectacles in Montreal. Its actual material form includes performance rooms including an immersive dome inaugurated in 2011, a research and development (R&D) laboratory, studios for artistic residencies and training, a restaurant and a café (Figure 2).

## Methodology

To investigate our research question, we have conducted a single in-depth case study with the SAT as its center.

### Data collection

In line with previous research on field configuration (e.g., Hardy & Maguire, 2010; Schüßler, Rüling, & Wittneben, 2014), we have collected several types of data (secondary and primary). We selected the data based on their specific relevance to the focus of our research (Golder, 2000), i.e., with the aim of understanding the influence of the SAT building—characterised by its geographical location, material form, and meanings—on the emergence and evolution of the field of projection mapping.

With this objective in mind, we began by collecting archival data on the SAT. First, an exhaustive search for articles on the SAT from its creation in 1996 until 2023 was carried out using Europress, a database of news article archives. Forty-six articles were thus collected, mainly from



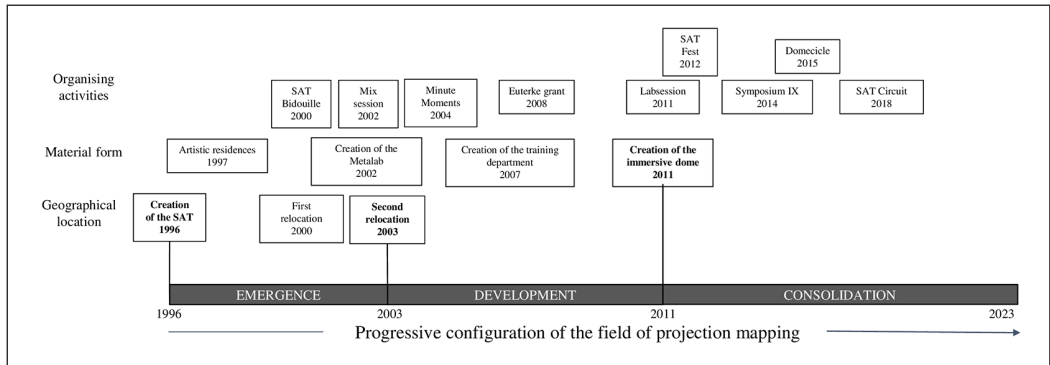
**Table 1.** Data collected.

Type	Information on collected data (number)	Use in analysis
<b>Secondary sources about the SAT</b>		
Media articles	General press articles about the SAT (46)	Develop an in-depth understanding of the evolution of the place in context
Website content	Older versions of the SAT's website (52)	Reconstruct how the place changed and developed over time
Other documents	Annual reports, documentary, R&D lab digital archives (12)	Identification of the main projects and activities
<b>Secondary sources about the projection mapping field</b>	Books (7), book chapter (1), academic papers (12), industry reports (3), documentaries (4), general press articles (51)	Gain general insights into the field's origins, practices, meaning system, and key actors
<b>Primary sources</b>		
Interviews	Actual and former employees of the SAT (8) Members of the field (21), including artists and event organisers	Elicit informants' perspective on the history of the place and its influence in the field Understanding the creative activities that happen at the place and their influence in the field
Non-participant observations	Guided tour with a member of the management team (1) Attendance at events (4)	Embodied understanding of the place's spatial layout and observation of teams' activities Experience of projection mapping performances

three local media (La Presse, Le Devoir, and Radio-Canada). Second, all the previous versions of the SAT website, from its first version in 1997 until 2023, were retrieved in intervals of six months. This was done using the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine, which stores versions of websites that are no longer online (McInerney, 2008). This allowed us to learn about the SAT's different activities (i.e., artistic programs, event organisation, technologies, etc.) and adaptations in geographical location and material form. Secondary sources were supplemented by the digital archives' website produced by the SAT's R&D laboratory, allowing us to have an overview of the multiple research programs, and by a documentary devoted to the place (*Immersion au cœur de la SAT*, 2023), which provides interviews with current and former employees, as well as numerous data on the history and activities of the SAT. Finally, available activity reports (from 2012 to 2023) were also systematically collected.

In parallel, to refine our understanding of the field of projection mapping in general, we have also collected secondary data such as books, academic papers, documentaries, and press articles on projection mapping retrieved from the Europress database (see the complete list in the online supplemental material for this article). All these datasets allowed us to trace longitudinally the evolution of this field with that of the SAT since its emergence, while limiting retrospective bias.

To supplement our dataset, we have also collected two types of primary data. First, the first author conducted 29 semi-structured interviews with current and former SAT staff (8) and members of the field who regularly attend or have attended the place (21). The interviews lasted between 30 minutes and 1 hour 15 minutes, and they were all recorded and fully transcribed. Topics covered



**Figure 3.** Co-evolution of the field of projection mapping and SAT building.

include the history and activities of the SAT, and how the interviewees perceive its influence on the emergence and evolution of this field. Second, five non-participant observations in the SAT building were also carried out. These include a guided tour, which allows one to take extensive notes on the structure and its spatial organisation, to see concretely what actors do in the place, and also to benefit from informal discussion with the guide. The first author also attended four events in the immersive dome to experience and gain insight into the actual performance of projection mapping. Table 1 provides an overview of the data collected.

### Data analysis

*Data analysis was conducted in several stages.* First, as recommended by Langley (1999), we adopted a narrative approach to gain an overall understanding of the evolution of the SAT building and that of the field of projection mapping. Based on the reading and re-reading of our entire dataset, we wrote a detailed narrative about the key actors, events, and the adaptations of the SAT building according to its three characteristics. This allowed us to note all the changes in the interactions, practices, and meanings that make up this exchange field and the influence of the SAT in such a process.

Second, based on this extensive narrative, its reading and re-reading, we created a timeline that begins with the creation of the SAT and the emergence of this exchange field in 1996 and ends with the last year of the data collection in 2023. In this timeline, we have been careful to identify the major adaptations in the three characteristics of the SAT building (geographical location, material form, and meanings) and to link them to the evolution of the projection mapping field. Adopting a temporal bracketing approach (Langley, 1999), three phases were identified and this allowed us to examine critical transitions (Leca et al., 2015), i.e., adaptations in the SAT building that led to major steps in the emergence and evolution of the field: the emergence phase (1996–2002) with the creation of the SAT building, the development phase (2003–2010) with the SAT building’s relocation to the Quartier des Spectacles in Montreal, and the consolidation phase (2011–2023) with the creation of a dome dedicated to a specific and immersive projection format, called the *Satosphere*, in the SAT building. This temporal bracketing was presented and confirmed by all our interviewees (Figure 3).

Based on this temporal bracketing, we then focused on how the adaptations of the SAT building have concretely influenced the configuration of this exchange field. To achieve this, we conducted a data reduction exercise (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Using both inductive and deductive reasoning,

we iterated between data and theory. The first author, who is intimately familiar with the context, sought to understand how the three characteristics of the SAT building and their adaptations influenced the configuration of this field during the different identified phases. The co-author played the role of devil's advocate by posing probing questions and challenging interpretations (Louis & Bartunek, 1992), thereby helping in the interpretation of findings and ensuring consistency between data sources and interpretations.

We searched for evidence of the influence of the SAT building on the emergence and evolution of the field, identifying common emerging patterns. This process allowed us to uncover three types of influence: supporting the community, fostering interorganisational relationships, and catalysing innovation. Supporting the community involves providing material, financial, temporal, and cognitive resources to enable the creation, experimentation, and development of an artistic community around a common practice. Fostering interorganisational relationships entails a dual movement: creating, welcoming, and supporting various organisations within the field and connecting with other cross-disciplinary fields outside the field. Catalysing innovation involves the gradual material adaptation of the building and the development of technical resources and knowledge to facilitate the production and diffusion of specific technology. Figure 4 illustrates the data structure that emerged and Table 2 provides some representative evidence.

## Findings

Our findings detail how the three characteristics of the SAT building as a place, along with their adaptations, have contributed to configuring the field of projection mapping as it moved from emergence to development and finally to consolidation.

### *Emergence by providing the community with a physical layout (1996–2002)*

The creation of the SAT building has been instrumental in the emergence of the field of projection mapping, mainly through supporting the community by providing a physical layout, and by beginning to foster interorganisational relationships within and outside the field, and to a lesser extent, by catalysing innovation.

During the emergence phase, the influence of the SAT building was decisive in supporting and developing the field community by providing a relatively permanent place for interaction. Prior to its inception, Montreal already hosted many VJs and digital artists. However, these actors did not constitute a cohesive community. Drawing on this favorable local context, the creation of the SAT building in 1996 facilitated the meeting of these previously scattered artists: “The SAT acted as a magnet. I’d say we’ve managed to crystallise some very, very strong segments of Montreal that have finally given themselves a place to collaborate and do projects together” (*Immersion au cœur de la SAT*, 2023). As well as bringing them together, the SAT also regularly organised various small-scale activities (exhibitions, parties, conferences, etc.) that further contributed to the development of these informal interactions, creating common interests and topics for discussion, gradually becoming a focal point for creators: “It really was a central meeting point for the digital arts community in Montreal. My career was very much determined by the SAT” (interview, event organiser 1). At the time, the SAT attracted around 350 community members per year who regularly interacted in the building.

To further support the community, the SAT actively shaped conditions conducive to creation and experimentation. From the outset, the aim of the management team was to “bring together the community of creators using new technologies in order to ( . . . ) facilitate projects and stimulate the creation of new types of content” (SAT’s website archives). To this end, the SAT provided artists

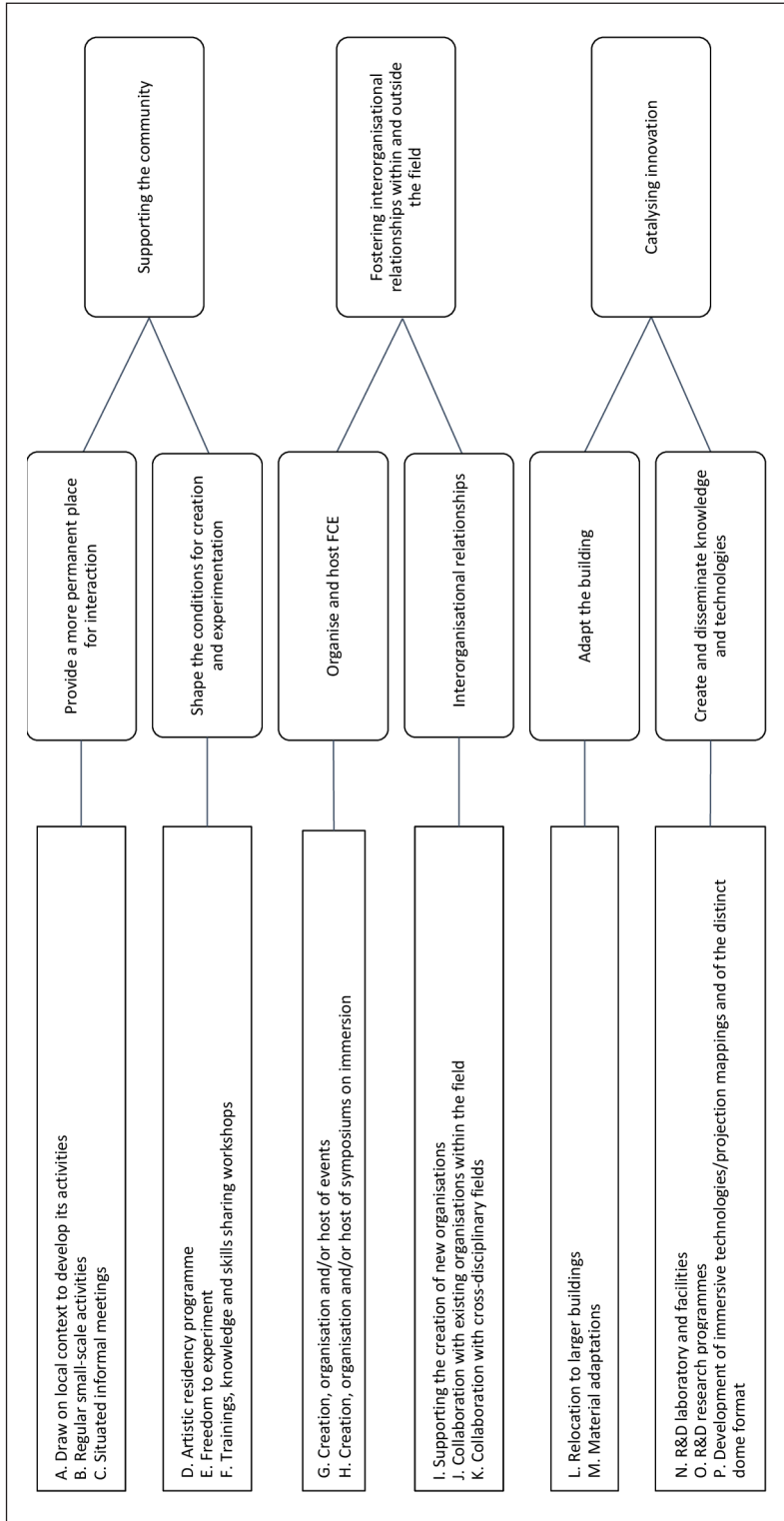


Figure 4. Data structure.

**Table 2.** Empirical evidence.

Aggregate dimension Second-order concepts	First-order concepts and representative quotes
<p><b>Supporting the community</b> Provide a more permanent place for interaction</p>	<p><b>A. Draw on local context to develop its activities</b>            A.1 The ISEA 95 Montréal team has therefore created the SAT, which looks after the Inter-Society's head office, while seeking to develop activities with a more local scope, such as tomorrow's thematic forum and evening. (<i>press article, Le Devoir, 29.08.96</i>)            A.2 There are a lot of former VJs who have a kind of allegiance to the SAT because they come from the same core. A lot who also come from the '90s rave core, the whole rave scene, but I'll tell you maybe more in VJing. (<i>interview, artist 5</i>)</p> <p><b>B. Regular small-scale activities</b>            B.1 We don't want to marginalise ourselves too much either, but we're trying to find the right balance between diffusion, which can be closer to entertainment, and research and innovation, which can sometimes be more difficult, more time-consuming and more marginal, but which is ultimately at the heart of our DNA. (<i>interview, managing team member 2</i>)            B.2 And then, where I cut my teeth a little more, there was an evening that took place at the SAT, the Société des Arts Technologiques in Montreal, the Electro-Chic evenings. There must have been about twenty of these events, and I was a bit like the resident for these. [date of first electro-chic evenings: 2003]. (<i>interview, artist 4</i>)</p> <p><b>C. Situated informal meetings</b>            C.1 So the SAT, I think, was born out of a need in Montreal to bring together all this flying creativity, in terms of digital art, and to create a central hub for creation. At the very least, to bring people together, and the rest was a matter of how people nurtured the space and the openness that was created around it. (<i>interview, artist 1</i>)            C.2 That's where I first met VJ Ma, back in 2011 I think. My training at the SAT was more in 2013. And that's when we realised that what we were also interested in was scenography, so more than just pushing the screen back. (<i>interview, artist 2</i>)</p>
<p>Shape the conditions for creation and experimentation</p>	<p><b>D. Artistic residency program</b>            D.1 Artist residencies, funded by grants from the Canada Council for the Arts; awarded through a competitive process, projects are reviewed by the SAT board of directors and an external member, based on feasibility and relevance to digital culture. (<i>SAT's website archive</i>)            D.2 During residencies, we provide technologies, including prototypes. A distinction is made between creative and artistic residencies, and industrial residencies. (<i>informal conversation during guided tour</i>)</p> <p><b>E. Freedom to experiment</b>            E.1 Examples of this kind of collaboration include the development of set design for electro concerts, and the creation of a collective with some fifty video artists. (<i>press article, Le Devoir, 21.07.03</i>)            E.2 At first, I was afraid they wouldn't allow me to install my structure, but after I managed to introduce an acrobatic bridge over ten meters high extended by a cantilever over five meters in a sphere, I understood that the team could accommodate any challenge! (<i>SAT's website archive</i>)</p>

(Continued)

**Table 2.** (Continued)

Aggregate dimension Second-order concepts	First-order concepts and representative quotes
<b>Fostering interorganisational relationships within and outside the field</b> <i>Organise and host FCE</i>	<p><b>F. Trainings, knowledge, and skills sharing workshops</b></p> <p>F.1 Initially regarded as special or pilot projects, the SAT initiated, in 2006, under the name TRANSFORM, which enables the transfer of knowledge based on the research undertaken at SAT over the last five years, focusing on immersive environments, interactivity, and high-speed networks. (<i>annual report 2012–2013</i>)</p> <p>F.2 In addition to this almost diplomatic role and the many artistic events held here, the SAT also boasts a school open to all (SAT Campus), summer camps for children (SAT Kids). (<i>press article, Radio Canada, 09.09.17</i>)</p>
	<p><b>G. Creation, organisation and/or host of events</b></p> <p>G.1 I'd say the SAT is somewhere in between. They host Mutek, and I would say that Mutek and the Satosphere have this Vjing side and at the same time performances that are more in the realm of art, experimental. . . (<i>interview, event organiser 1</i>)</p> <p>G.2 The Domesicle party series is back for a new season with 6 immersive evenings to be enjoyed on Saturday evenings this summer under the Satosphere! [. . .] This summer's 2019 edition will feature some select collaborations between DJs and VJs, mostly from Montreal labels, who have developed their creations specifically for the dome's 360 environment. (<i>SAT's website archive</i>)</p>
<i>Interorganisational relationships</i>	<p><b>H. Creation, organisation and/or host of symposiums on immersion</b></p> <p>H.1 50 pioneers in immersive art and research will meet to review the state of the art in immersive creation, standardise formats and design joint projects. (<i>press article, La Presse, 10.05.14</i>)</p> <p>H.2 In short, its mandate is to provide a showcase for the digital arts (five world premiere creations in the Satosphere) and to provide an overview of research (five conferences and four round tables) and techniques (some fifteen demonstrations), while encouraging the formulation of a critical discourse. The development of a creation and distribution network is another of the event's avowed aims. (<i>press article, Le Devoir, 20.05.14</i>)</p>
	<p><b>I. Supporting the creation of new organisations</b></p> <p>I.1 The fun thing is that it's gone from being a passive installation to an interactive one, because we started out in a bar in Montreal called Laïka, and Laïka is a bit like the little SAT bar. It was SAT alumni who created Laïka. [Laïka was founded in 1999.] (<i>interview, artist 1</i>)</p> <p>I.2 The SAT, she explains, is a kind of melting pot or matrix for all young digital artists. We're often their first employer. It's here, doing digital research and creation, that they decide whether they're going to be artists, entrepreneurs or digital professionals at Moment Factory, Ubisoft, Sid Lee or Cirque du Soleil. SAT is as much an incubator as it is a place to network. (<i>press article, La Presse, 08.03.12</i>)</p>

(Continued)

Table 2. (Continued)

Aggregate dimension Second-order concepts	First-order concepts and representative quotes
Catalysing innovation Adapt the building	<p><b>J. Collaboration with existing organisations within the field</b></p> <p>J.1 As part of the MAPP_MTL festival, the SAT will be offering an introductory projection mapping workshop with the software Slash in collaboration with the Lab148 cooperative, as well as a creative workshop with TouchDesigner, so that everyone can have fun! (SAT's website archive)</p> <p>J.2 The technologies produced here are used here, but we also work with Vyv, which produces servers and software for projection. (interview, managing team 2)</p>
	<p><b>K. Collaboration with cross-disciplinary fields</b></p> <p>K.1 The wide range of customers who attend the SAT confirms its exceptional positioning and its ability to bridge the gap between the arts (festivals, theater companies, artist-run centers, museums, etc.), higher education (computer science, communications, engineering, etc.) and industry (film, games, software, etc.). (SAT's website archive)</p> <p>K.2 The SAT is also developing relationships with planetariums, which showcase some works. (press article, La Presse, 27.09.19)</p>
Create and disseminate knowledge and technologies	<p><b>L. Relocation to larger buildings</b></p> <p>L.1 It all started in a much smaller space. . . In short, there was a whole migration of creative space, eventually ending up in the building we still occupy today. (interview managing team member 2)</p> <p>L.2 Far from being the main subsidiser, the City of Montreal has advanced the sum of \$281,721 for this eventual relocation project. The plan for the SAT's new premises involves acquiring and renovating the building. (press article, Le Devoir, 06.07.02)</p>
	<p><b>M. Material adaptation</b></p> <p>M.1 Most of the funding (\$8.1 million) [. . .] will enable the SAT to carry out work to ensure the long-term viability of its premises, and to acquire specialised equipment. The work will also involve fitting out and optimising the premises to enhance the experience of artists and audiences alike. (press article, La Presse, 24.02.22)</p> <p>M.2 Adjacent to the café, a large, airy space with 4.5-metre-high ceilings will welcome the public during performances. (press article, La Presse, 06.06.03)</p>
	<p><b>N. R&amp;D laboratory and facilities</b></p> <p>O.1 The whole second floor is for the laboratory, where the development work is done. They have mini-domes, two mini-domes on this floor, for experiments, and other equipment. (interview artist 1)</p> <p>O.2 Here we have a multidisciplinary team and a very horizontal approach. And the fact that the team is very eclectic in terms of skills, which I think is a particularity of Metalab compared with other research laboratories, also enables us to try out new things, as if as a team we had developed quite a strong and complete general culture, which means that we can use knowledge from one field to enrich another. (documentary, Immersion au cœur de la SAT, 2023)</p>

(Continued)

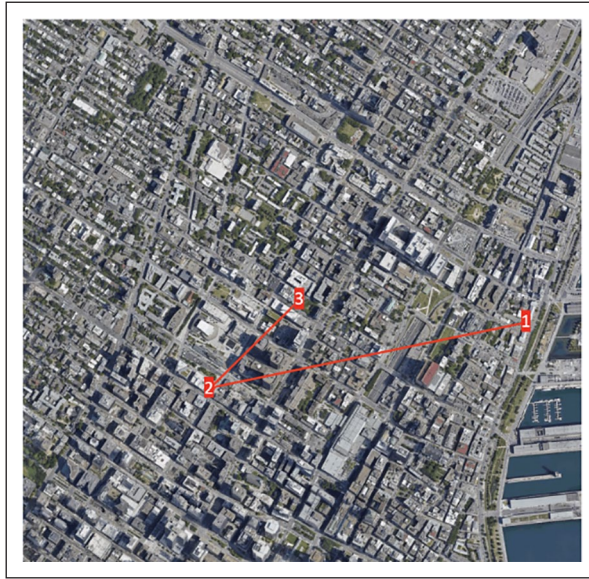
**Table 2.** (Continued)

Aggregate dimension Second-order concepts	First-order concepts and representative quotes
	<p><b>O. R&amp;D research programmes</b></p> <p>O.1 Initially there were 4, 5, 8, 10 of us researchers, artists, university researchers or freelancers, who used the SAT as our laboratory, our premises. Then Monique Savoie had the intelligence to turn it into something that would last. It's the least visible thing about the SAT, but perhaps the most fundamental. (<i>documentary, Immersion au cœur de la SAT, 2023</i>)</p> <p>O.2 The Society for Arts and Technology doesn't just present immersive shows in its Satosphere dome. The SAT is also involved in fundamental and applied research. Last week, its Metalab team conducted four days of experiments on a new device that could one day be used by artists, academics, and health professionals alike, communicating virtually from anywhere in the world. (<i>press article, La Presse, 23.09.13</i>)</p> <p><b>P. Development of immersive technologies/projection mappings and of the distinct dome format</b></p> <p>P.1 On Monday, after several years of research, SAT unveiled Open Scenes, a new stage telepresence system that will enable artists living thousands of kilometers apart to work collaboratively. (<i>press article, Le Devoir, 19.09.17</i>)</p> <p>P.2 We have perhaps the most advanced instrument in the world. Not only is our dome one of the most recent, but it was designed by artists for artists. (<i>press article, Le Devoir, 20.05.14</i>)</p>

with considerable freedom and autonomy to experiment with projection techniques, positioning itself as a pioneer in this creative practice. As one artist noted, the SAT served as “a centre to help us project our creativity, which was non-profit, which was losing money, but which was going to create the strength that we have now in Montreal” (interview, artist 3). In parallel, the SAT organised knowledge and skill-sharing workshops, such as SAT Bidouille, and collective artistic experiments. For instance, an artist recounted a notable experimental creation in the early 2000s where “there was a (video) mixer in the middle of the room and anyone could come and plug into the mixer” (interview, artist 1). To sustain the artistic experimentation over the long term, in 1997 the SAT also launched a permanent artist residency program by providing resources such as funding, time, access to technologies, and a dedicated workspace in the building. “A dozen people currently work at the SAT—including five artists in residence” (*Le Devoir*, August 1997). These diverse organising activities were instrumental in developing shared meanings within the community, developing aesthetic and technical standards, and cultivating practices around projection mapping. Through these initiatives, the SAT not only facilitated the emergence and diffusion of projection mapping but also contributed to its recognition as an artistic field.

Indeed, the SAT played a pivotal role in the emergence of this field by fostering interorganizational relationships both within and outside it. Within the field, the social effervescence at the SAT led to the creation of two important organisations: the Mutek festival and the Moment Factory studio. Mutek, an avant-garde festival dedicated to the promotion of electronic music and digital art, was founded in 2000 by Alain Mongeau, one of the founding members of the SAT. “In the opinion of many observers, 2002 will go down in the annals of the Mutek festival as the year of consecration” (*La Presse*, June 2002). With the festival attracting nearly 8,000 spectators that year,





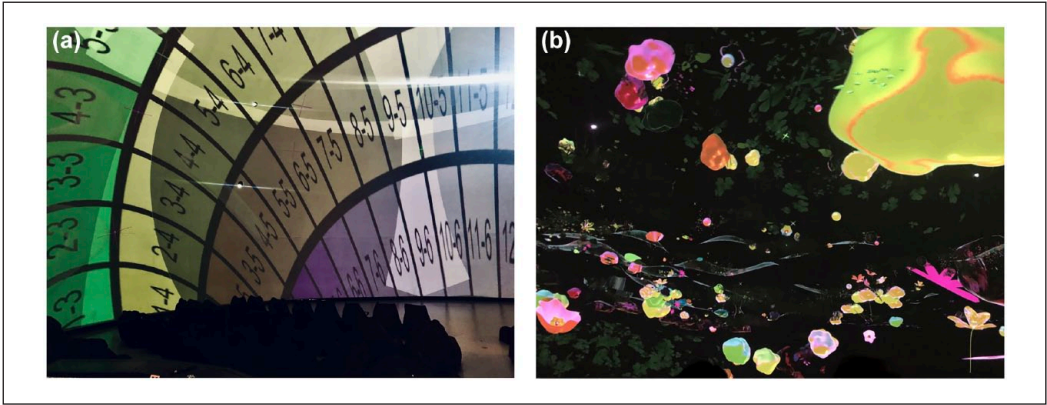
**Figure 5.** The different SAT building locations in Montreal: (1) in Marché Bonsecours from 1996 to 2000, to (2) Rue Sainte-Catherine from 2000 to 2003, and then (3) to Boulevard Saint-Laurent, in the Quartier des Spectacles, since 2003 (source: Google Maps, 2023).

including at the SAT, Mutek began to act as an important FCE. As such, it provided additional opportunities for artists to create and gain visibility by performing projection mapping artworks. In parallel, the informal interactions made possible by the SAT have given rise to several studios, including Moment Factory, which was “practically born within the walls of the SAT” (*Le Devoir*, June 2022). This studio was one of the first to specialise in projection mapping and has since created more than 550 works (e.g., for Billie Eilish concerts and immersive forest walks). By providing resources for the organisation of events, the SAT has encouraged an increase in the number of members involved in the distinct practice of projection mapping, giving the field a more substantial existence.

Outside the field, the SAT fostered interorganisational relationships by reaching out into cross-disciplinary fields in hosting projection mapping exhibitions such as *Landscape 1* at the Cinémathèque, or in organising conferences on the future of cinema during the Festival du Nouveau Cinéma, or on technologies in museums at the Museum of Contemporary Art. These cross-disciplinary collaborations involving local institutions increased the visibility and legitimacy of projection mapping outside its original boundaries.

Finally, the SAT contributed to configuring the field by beginning to create the knowledge needed to support a specific approach, thus starting to catalyse innovation. In 2000, four years after its creation, the SAT moved to a larger building on rue Sainte-Catherine (Figure 5) to accommodate its expanding activities.

This relocation facilitated the creation of the SAT’s R&D department, Metalab, in 2002, under the influence of Luc Courchesne, an artist and co-founder of the SAT. Metalab allowed scientists, engineers, and artists to work closely together on a new innovative practice, immersive projection, which allows projection onto new surfaces such as sculptures or interior walls, enveloping the audience in projected images, as opposed to the traditional projection onto buildings’ facades and large screens. As one artist noted, “[Luc Courchesne] was really thinking about projections with



**Figure 6.** Immersive dome of the SAT before a performance (a), and during a performance (b) (source: author).

other surfaces; he was very important for that” (interview, artist 5). This led to the gradual development of the knowledge needed to devise immersive projection techniques.

In summary, the establishment of the SAT building played a pivotal role in the emergence of the projection mapping field. Through its physical layout and organising activities, the SAT facilitated the creation and development of a unified community and cultivated shared professional norms and practices within the field. Furthermore, by actively collaborating within the field and with cross-disciplinary fields, the SAT contributed significantly to the recognition of projection mapping as an emerging field.

### *Development by catalysing further innovation (2003–2011)*

In 2003, the SAT underwent a major transition by moving to a new building on Boulevard Saint-Laurent in the Quartier des Spectacles, Montreal, where it is still located today (see Figure 5). Beyond the desire to participate in the transformation of this neighborhood (*Le Devoir*, July 2003), this relocation was motivated by the need for additional space to expand its activities, particularly for immersive projection, which had started a few years earlier. During this phase, the SAT building mostly contributed to the development of the field by being a catalyst for innovation, while continuing to support the community and foster interorganisational relationships both within and outside the field.

The SAT’s enhanced role as a catalyst for innovation provided a major impetus to the development of the projection mapping field. Securing permission to add two additional floors to its existing infrastructure (*La Presse*, June 2003), the SAT progressively materially adapted each floor of its building. In particular, the first floor has been allocated entirely to its R&D laboratory, Metalab (see Figure 2), which has grown to over ten permanent employees. Building on increased space, resources, collaborations with universities (e.g., the University of Montreal), technology companies (e.g., Vyv), public institutions (e.g., the National Film Board), and artists, Metalab has initiated various R&D programs to create knowledge and develop technologies, prototypes, and software tailored to the technical and creative needs of artists working with immersive projection. This resulted in, for example, the *Panoscope*, a device for individual immersive projections, and *Ars Natura*, a circular panoramic installation, both of which formed the basis of this practice. This

gradual focus on immersive projection, moving beyond conventional facade-based mapping, has laid the foundations for a permanent facility and operational standards within the field.

At the same time, the SAT has continued to support community cohesion by maintaining its role as a leading place for shaping the conditions for creation and experimentation, including immersive projection. To this end, the SAT has dedicated its basement (see Figure 2) to the training department created in 2007, which trains artists in content creation and projection techniques. The basement also hosts residency programs and knowledge-sharing workshops focusing on interactivity and immersive projection. These initiatives have contributed to the growth of the community of artists, improving their technical skills and knowledge, and their experimentation with projecting on different surfaces (walls, columns, sculptures, and so on) (Figure 6).

In parallel, the SAT has strengthened its role as a place for interaction. Indeed, in its new building, the SAT has dedicated its floor 0 (see Figure 2) to its artistic program and the organisation of almost 200 small-scale activities, attracting approximately 6,500 members and 60,000 spectators a year. In 2008, one artist noted: “it was the explosion of the scene” (interview, artist 2). With a capacity of around 1,000 spectators, this floor is described as “a large open area, approximately 40 metres long and 20 metres wide with columns. It’s a great space that facilitated our beginnings, and indeed, the entire community largely started there” (interview, artist 1). All these activities created repeated opportunities for interaction and informal meetings, exchange of ideas, and collaboration. These ultimately contributed to the vibrancy of the projection mapping community and the diffusion of its innovative projection artworks.

By moving into its current building, the SAT has not only expanded its physical footprint, but has also become a central place for fostering interorganisational relationships both within and outside the field. Within the field, the SAT has continued to host different FCEs, such as the influential Mutek digital arts festival, which has seen significant growth, attracting up to 68,000 visitors and 190 international artists. The editorial alignment between Mutek and the SAT contributed to raise the visibility of projection mapping as a distinct digital art practice. “Places like the SAT and events like Mutek have allowed us to come together (. . .) but also to establish these practices as part of a new art form” (*Radio-Canada*, August 2023).

As well as hosting various FCEs, in this phase, the SAT also launched and organised two new recurring FCEs, the *Mix Sessions* in 2002 and the *Minute Moments* in 2004. These FCEs, organised bi-monthly, have been instrumental in shaping meanings and structuring content creation practices within the field. Despite their differences, both events promoted experimentation within specific constraints, such as image-sound harmony or time limit, and successfully attracted peers and a wide audience: “The Mix Sessions were a fantastic place to do stylistic exercises and have a technical team behind us who could explain how it works and how to distort our projections” (interview, artist 4).

Outside the field, the SAT has continued to foster interorganisational relationships with various cross-disciplinary fields, organising the Interfaces meetings between 2005 and 2009, a series of “conference-demos (. . .) to identify and activate horizontal links between digital sectors with a view to stimulating non-traditional collaborations” (SAT’s website archives), in which video game studios (e.g., Ubisoft), VFX studios (e.g., Modus FX), and technology companies (e.g., Autodesk) participate. These interorganisational relationships within and outside the field have cemented the SAT as an important place where members can showcase their work to peers and other cross-disciplinary fields, promoting immersive artworks and differentiating projection mapping from other creative practices.

Through its relocation and ongoing material adaptation efforts, the SAT has acquired a strong mandate within the projection mapping field. The resources provided, coupled with the creative freedom granted and the materiality of the building, have created an unparalleled place for creation

and experimentation. In particular, the gradual innovative focus on immersive projection, enabled by the relocation to a larger building, has significantly influenced the practices and shared meanings within the field. This focus has facilitated the development of new techniques and skills, enriched collective understanding, and advanced the development of projection mapping as a field.

### *Consolidation through material lock-in (2011–2023)*

This last phase began with a major material adaptation of the SAT building: the construction of the *Satosphere*, a publicly funded, permanent 360° immersive dome, located on the second floor (see Figure 2). By adapting its building with the *Satosphere*, the SAT has influenced the consolidation of the field at a time when projection mapping was becoming ubiquitous in Montreal venues (e.g., on building facades in the Quartier des Spectacles, Igloofest music festival). During this phase, the SAT acted as a catalyst for innovation and fostered interorganisational relationships while supporting the community in the direction set by this facility.

By adapting its building with the *Satosphere* as its flagship facility, the SAT has significantly catalysed innovation in immersive projection. The *Satosphere*, the culmination of a decade-long R&D initiative led by Metalab, has enabled the SAT to create and disseminate knowledge and immersive projection technologies in collaboration with universities and local technology companies such as Vyv. To further enhance its expertise in dome-format projection mapping, the SAT has continued to initiate R&D projects, including the recent creation of a haptic floor designed to enhance audience immersion. These efforts have established the SAT as a leader in providing state-of-the-art facilities that push the boundaries of artistic expression. Indeed, the construction of the *Satosphere* has fundamentally consolidated the shared meaning within the field towards immersion, providing an unparalleled creative playground for artists, and the establishment of dome projection as a distinct category of artistic expression.

The construction of the *Satosphere* has fostered and expanded interorganisational relationships within the field. This extension is evidenced by the creation of organisations like NEST, which specialises in dome-format content creation and was co-founded by a former SAT employee in 2015, and Hubblo, which was founded in 2021 and presents immersive films in the *Satosphere*. In addition, the SAT reinforced its specialised position by creating SAT Fest in 2012, an annual event dedicated to immersive video and short films, and Dômesicle in 2015, a recurring event with electronic music, thus furthering the development of dome-format content creation. Since 2014, the SAT has also organised the international symposium on immersion, IX, and in 2022, co-organised and hosted Imersa, a symposium on domes and immersive technologies for the arts and sciences. These various symposiums made it possible “to take stock of the state of the art in immersive creation, standardise formats and initiate joint projects” (*La Presse*, May 2014). In this way, the SAT contributed to critical dialogue between artists, academic researchers, and technology companies within the field to advance immersive art. Alongside its gradual specialisation, the SAT has been a consistent supporter of influential FCEs such as the Mutek festival, which it has hosted 19 times between 2000 and 2023. It has also supported the creation of new festivals, such as Lumifest, for which the SAT curates artists and showcases innovative performances.

Interorganisational relationships outside the field have also developed, initiating new cross-disciplinary collaborations using the immersive dome as a performance stage for events such as Boiler Room for electronic music, Composite for digital arts, as well as dance, theater, and circus performances. These interorganisational relationships within and outside the field underscore the SAT’s ongoing commitment to consolidating it, supporting the development of new organisations, and establishing a distinct identity for projection mapping through pioneering artistic artworks around immersive technologies.

At the same time, the SAT has continued to support the community by nurturing an environment conducive to creation and experimentation in immersive projection. Central to these efforts is the ongoing residency program, which hosts approximately 60 artists per year. This program emphasises the use of the Satosphere, giving artists the freedom to explore their creativity with the aim of “innovating in the medium” (interview, managing team member 3). Given the unique nature of the immersive dome as “the first and only dome of its kind in the world, dedicated exclusively to experimentation and artistic diffusion” (*Le Devoir*, March 2012), artists are encouraged to familiarise themselves with dome-specific techniques. To facilitate this, the SAT has developed training courses to help artists acquire the necessary skills. This initiative underlines the SAT’s key role in developing skills and disseminating knowledge in the field while providing an environment that encourages creative exploration in the dome format.

In parallel, to support community cohesion, the SAT has continued to organise various activities, such as the *Mix Sessions*, and has launched new ones, such as Labsessions in 2011. Labsessions invites emerging artists to publicly present their projects to a diverse audience of professionals in the field, such as curators from artist-run centers and events. These small-scale activities encourage informal interactions that facilitate the exchange of ideas and the cultivation of shared meanings. However, the majority of the regular artistic program—including performances, exhibitions, films—now takes place in the Satosphere, with up to five events a week. This focus on the Satosphere has led to mixed reactions from local artists: “We felt we were being left behind compared to what was happening downstairs, which was more organic. If you didn’t have the training to work in the dome, you had no business being here” (interview, artist 11), while others feel that: “projection in the dome is like, if you do projection mapping in Montreal, it’s kind of a must, that you’ve done a projection in the dome at the SAT once in your life” (interview, artist 12).

Through material adaptation and the construction of the Satosphere, the SAT has significantly consolidated and anchored the field of immersive projection. By setting technological standards and maintaining community engagement, the SAT has specialised as a place for this specific projection format, further enhancing its great influence within and outside the field.

### *The evolving influence of a building in the configuration of an exchange field*

Our findings highlight the significant and evolving influence of the SAT building as a place in configuring the field of projection mapping. During the emergence phase, the SAT provided essential resources and a dedicated space for community members to regularly interact, exchange ideas, and experiment freely. Its early initiatives, which included the promotion of new practices, the creation of new organisations, and the hosting of influential FCEs, laid the foundations for the field of projection mapping.

During the development phase, the SAT’s geographical relocation to a larger building enhanced its ability to catalyse innovation through an expanded R&D laboratory and a focus on immersive projection technologies. This move enabled the SAT to foster interorganisational relationships within and outside its field, thereby supporting further community cohesion and facilitating the development of distinctive practices within the field of projection mapping.

In the consolidation phase, the SAT’s material adaptation, marked by the addition of a flagship facility and a progressive specialisation in the dome format, oriented the development of innovative practices centered on immersive projection. At the same time, the continued support of the community and the intensification of interorganisational relationships have contributed significantly to the strengthening of shared meanings.

In summary, the case of the SAT building as a strong field mandate building shows how a specific place has a key role in the emergence and evolution of an exchange field through various

mechanisms. First, by providing a relatively stable physical layout, the place facilitates the formation and continuous support of a community, encourages interactions, and supports experimentation, innovation, and skills development, thereby facilitating creative practices. Second, by fostering interorganisational relationships, the place increases visibility and collaboration within and across fields, contributing to the wider recognition of projection mapping as a distinct field. Finally, through geographical and material adaptations, the place evolves to sustain some innovations. By revealing these mechanisms, our findings enhance our understanding of how a place, characterised both by its relative permanence and its defining characteristics' adaptations, influences the emergence and evolution of an exchange field.

## Discussion

The aim of this paper was to explore the influence of place on field configuration by analysing a specific building that has fostered the emergence and evolution of an exchange field. In doing so, our research extends the understanding of exchange fields by providing a more spatial and contextualised approach to the field's configuration process (Schüßler et al., 2015), considering that "where things happen is critical to knowing how and why they happen" (Warf & Arias, 2008, p. 1).

Our findings contribute to the literature on field configuration and that on place in institutional dynamics in several ways. First, we theorise the influence of place as a more permanent venue in the configuration of an exchange field, introducing the concept of the field-configuring place (FCP). This concept allows us to theoretically discuss its relationships with the complementary mechanism of FCEs. Second, we contribute to the literature on institutional dynamics by examining the role of place not only in institutional maintenance and change, but also in the emergence and evolution of a field. By systematically considering the three defining characteristics of a place, we deepen our understanding of its dual nature, both stable and dynamic.

### *Contributions to the relationships between the field-configuring place and the field-configuring event*

In contrast to the literature that has mainly focused on FCEs, i.e., temporary organisations in which members of a field can interact and develop shared meanings (Lampel & Meyer, 2008; Schüßler & Sydow, 2012), our research examines the specific role of place to further understand the mechanisms that trigger and shape the emergence and evolution of exchange fields. Based on our findings, this led us to introduce and develop the concept of the field-configuring place (FCP). We define an FCP as a relatively permanent social and material venue, such as a building, that provides a unique setting in which diverse people and organisations can gather and interact on a long-term basis to build and support community, foster interorganisational relationships, catalyse innovation, and develop shared meanings. From a theoretical point of view, we discuss the relationships between FCPs and the well-known configuration mechanism of FCEs, as they share some similarities but also have some differences. Based on our findings and literature, we identify three dimensions that distinguish them: more permanent vs. more temporary, process focus vs. product focus, and cross-disciplinary vs. mono-disciplinary.

First, the main distinction between FCPs and FCEs lies in their temporal boundedness, FCPs being more permanent and FCEs being more temporary. While the FCE perspective is stimulating, it is particularly conducive to observing "mechanisms of institutional change that lack temporal continuity" (Lampel & Meyer, 2008, p. 1027). In other words, because FCEs have a limited duration, ranging from a few hours to several days, they contribute to the configuration of a field in a

discontinuous manner (Schüßler, Rüling, & Wittneben, 2014). This inherent characteristic of FCEs, which have a predetermined end date, allows organisers to anticipate and orchestrate events' temporalities to generate and capitalise on high expectations (Schüßler, Rüling, & Wittneben, 2014). In considering a place, we adopt a more continuous view of how such a spatial setting can configure a field. Initially conceived with an indefinite time horizon (Bakker et al., 2016), the place perspective *de facto* recognises long-term orientation, in contrast to the temporal limitations of FCEs.

This more permanent nature of places allows different members and organisations to gather in a single site on a regular and even daily basis rather than on an exceptional (Oliver & Montgomery, 2008) or serial (Schüßler et al., 2014) basis, as seen in FCEs. The relative temporal continuity of a place provides ongoing opportunities for interactions that support the creation and development of shared meanings and practices, thereby enhancing both the understanding of the field and the emergence of new organisations, as shown in our case. This is particularly important in exchange fields, where repeated interactions and shared practices are essential for establishing a common language and identity (Zietsma et al., 2017). In addition, this relative permanence allows organisers to pursue both ephemeral and more enduring initiatives, mixing the benefits of temporary FCEs with those of more permanent places. These mixed temporalities can have a lasting and profound influence on the evolution of the field, combining both short-term and long-term orientations.

Second, FCPs differ from FCEs in that they are more process-oriented than product-oriented. While both FCPs and FCEs provide symbolic and economic resources, for example by being located in a conducive city or neighborhood (Glynn 2008; Lange & Schüßler, 2018; Schüßler et al., 2015; Schüßler, Dobusch, & Wessel, 2014), FCPs extend their influence further by offering additional resources. This could include temporal, social, spatial, and material resources for experimentation and innovation, thereby enabling the development of projects from the outset. While there are parallels with other places of knowledge production, such as laboratories (Galison, 1997; Knorr Cetina, 1992) or entrepreneurial incubators (Busch & Barkema, 2022), FCPs uniquely integrate all these opportunities in one place, fostering an environment where members are free to experiment and push the boundaries of practice.

In addition, while their relative permanence and the multiple resources made available allow FCPs to be initially process-oriented, they also have the ability to be product-oriented by showcasing resulting innovations and participating in their evaluation, similar to FCEs (Anand & Watson, 2004; Schüßler, Dobusch, & Wessel, 2014). By creating, organising, and hosting FCEs, FCPs act both as a backstage to support the creative process (process-oriented) and as a platform to launch and increase the visibility of the resulting innovations (product-oriented). We argue that this unique combination of process and product orientation positions FCPs as an important configuration mechanism both in the incubation of innovations and in their wider diffusion and recognition. Unlike FCEs (Schüßler, Rüling, & Wittneben, 2014), FCPs can introduce discontinuity while maintaining a continuous presence, supporting the ongoing evolution of their respective fields.

Third, FCPs are characterised by their cross-disciplinary nature, in contrast to FCEs, which are typically monodisciplinary. According to their seminal definition (Lampel & Meyer, 2008), FCEs are generally designed with a singular, focused objective, such as launching new products, defining standards for a new technology (Garud, 2008), creating a community (McInerney, 2008), or championing new product categories (Anand & Watson, 2004) within a particular field. In contrast, the relative permanent nature of FCPs allows them to exert a broader influence and cultivate relationships across different fields. This cross-disciplinary nature not only reinforces the distinctiveness of the field, but also helps to define its boundaries more clearly. By fostering cross-disciplinary relationships, FCPs contribute significantly to the development of a cohesive and integrated field identity. This integration not only facilitates the transfer of innovation across field boundaries, but also catalyses the emergence of new practices that further differentiate and advance the field (van

Wijk, Stam, Elfring, Zietsma, & den Hond, 2013). FCPs thus have a strong field mandate (Lampel & Meyer, 2008), developing existing norms and standards while at the same time driving the evolution of the field through cross-disciplinary relationships.

By delineating these three dimensions—permanence, process focus, and cross-disciplinarity—we provide a theoretical framework that underscores the complementary yet distinct roles of FCPs and FCEs in field configuration. Indeed, the FCP concept offers a way of looking at field configuration processes in a more distributed way, providing a more nuanced understanding of how organisational fields emerge and evolve.

### *Contributions to the literature on place in institutional dynamics*

Based on our findings, we also contribute to the growing literature on the role of place in institutional dynamics in two complementary ways. First, we consider the influence of place on an additional phase in the life cycle of a field—emergence—thereby enriching the existing body of knowledge. Second, through a systematic analysis of the three characteristics of the place and their adaptations, we extend our understanding of its dual nature as both stable and dynamic.

First, our study advances existing research by examining the influence of place on different phases of field evolution, from emergence to consolidation and eventually decline. Unlike previous studies that have primarily focused on the role of place in organisational and institutional maintenance (e.g., Crawford & Dacin, 2021; Dacin et al., 2010; Wright et al., 2021, 2022), where buildings are seen as stabilisers of institutions (Czarniawska, 2009; Monteiro & Nicolini, 2015; Siebert et al., 2017) and agents of change (e.g., Staggs et al., 2022; Wright et al., 2023), our research explores the emergence and evolution of a field. In doing so, we offer a novel perspective on how the creation of a place dedicated to a practice can foster emergence, facilitating the transition from a proto-field to a structured and cohesive field (Zietsma et al., 2017). We thus shed new light on the relationships between place and institutional dynamics as mutually constitutive (Wright et al., 2023) by showing that the creation of a single dedicated place, instead of multiple places (Rodner et al., 2020; Staggs et al., 2022), can actively configure a field. This challenges the conventional view of places as passive backdrops (Fine, 2010) and positions place as a critical trigger in the emergence of a field. In doing so, our findings also have practical implications for policymakers and practitioners seeking to foster innovation in various fields by highlighting the importance of place in the creation and configuration of a field (Dacin et al., 2024).

Second, we contribute to the recent perspective on place that emphasises its dual role as both stable and dynamic (Cartel et al., 2022; Dacin et al., 2019, 2024). We systematically analyse its three key characteristics—geographical location, material form, and meanings—and their adaptations, which are rarely explored in the literature (Gieryn, 2000; Jones et al., 2019). While we discuss each characteristic separately for the sake of analytical clarity, our study shows that adaptations—whether minor or major—have cumulative and long-term effects on the configuration of the field.

Regarding the geographical location, our findings challenge the notion of place as relatively static (Gieryn, 2000). We show that the (re)location of a building can influence the evolution of a field in two complementary ways. First, our study confirms that locating to a geographical area where field-specific activities are concentrated can enhance access to specialised resources and generate opportunities for field emergence (e.g., Lange & Schübler, 2018; Phillips, 2011; Staggs et al., 2022). In addition, we emphasise that location can actively support the creation and development of such resources by providing a conducive context for interactions and the realisation of practices in the field. This dynamic interaction drives the development and recognition of the field. Second, the relocation to larger buildings extends this line of inquiry by highlighting the need for



a place to adapt to the evolving shared meanings of the field and the needs of its members. Such relocation ensures the capacity to accommodate larger audiences and provide ample space for experimentation and exhibition, as demonstrated in our case. This adaptation is essential to ensure the continuity and development of the field.

In terms of material form, our study extends research considering the potential adaptability of buildings (e.g., Boutinot & Delacour, 2022; Colombero & Boxenbaum, 2019; Giovannoni & Quattrone, 2018; Wright et al., 2023). Our case demonstrates how the creation and material adaptation of a building not only embodies innovative practices (Jones & Massa, 2013) but also influences the development of the field. Indeed, major material adaptations such as the construction of the dome facility enable and valorise specific practices, echoing the construction of buildings dedicated to art forms (Rodner et al., 2020) or state-of-the-art laboratories (Staggs et al., 2022). Extending the work of Siebert (2024), these material adaptations first enable the emergence and development of the field by providing new opportunities for experimentation and interaction, and then potentially constrain its future evolution recursively. Indeed, once these major material adaptations are established, they orient the field towards a particular practice and thereby influence it, but only to a certain extent. Designing and adapting a building around a particular practice may ultimately impose some constraints that materially lock it into that practice (Jones & Massa, 2013), highlighting the complex interplay between place and institutional dynamics.

In terms of meanings, we deepen our understanding by highlighting how they are constructed through the complex interplay of location, materiality, and organising. This process is further reinforced and redefined by the actions of members within and through the place. Indeed, places are often deliberately shaped by their organisers (Beyes & Holt, 2020; Czarniawska, 2009; Zilber, 2018), who may seek to influence the field in which they participate. As such, organisers engage in a series of place-based activities aimed at fostering innovation, attracting specific audiences (Ferru, Rallet, & Cariou, 2022), maintaining rituals (Dacin et al., 2010), and enhancing the visibility and legitimacy of specific artists and technologies (Foster, Borgatti, & Jones, 2011). This helps to reveal and categorise innovations within the field, actively shaping shared meanings. However, in the ongoing orchestration of these diverse activities, place functions not only as the “medium and outcome” (Staggs et al., 2022, p. 270) of organisers’ efforts, but also as an instrument for creating and re-creating itself over time (Nash, 2020). We thus deepen our understanding of the dual nature of place by demonstrating how its three characteristics enable it to provide both stability and dynamism to a field, thereby influencing its configuration.

## Conclusion

This study has examined the influence of a place in the emergence and evolution of an exchange field. By providing a long-term perspective on the adaptation of the building’s three characteristics—geographical location, material form, and meanings—we show how it has gradually configured the field. This allows us to develop the concept of field-configuring places (FCPs) as a strong field mandate (Lampel & Meyer, 2008), in the hope of contributing to a deeper and more spatialised understanding of field configuration.

Despite the strengths and relevance of the FCP concept, future research would benefit from examining its influence on different types of organisational fields, such as issue fields (Hardy & Maguire, 2010; Hoffman, 1999; Schüßler et al., 2014). It would also be beneficial to examine the influence of FCPs on different field developments such as field partitioning (Faulconbridge & Muzio, 2021), overlapping, and alignment (van Wijk et al., 2013). It would also be interesting to examine the ability of FCPs to contest or maintain field configurations. In addition, we have underlined the complementarities between the FCP and FCE concepts. Future research could further

focus on the distribution between them, their power relations, and their dynamics in order to improve our knowledge of the conditions for field configuration and the allocation of field mandates throughout the whole cycle of a field.

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## ORCID iDs

Etienne Capron  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1413-6879>

Hélène Delacour  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1901-7438>

## Supplemental material

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### Author biographies

Etienne Capron (HEC Montréal, Mosaic – Pôle créativité et innovation) is post-doctoral researcher at Mosaic – HEC Montréal. His work focuses on the role of space and place in innovation process, specifically in creative industries. His research is published in journals such as *Management* or *Research in the Sociology of Organizations*.

Hélène Delacour (Université de Lorraine, CEREFIGE, Nancy, France) holds a PhD in strategy from IAE University of Paris 1, Panthéon-Sorbonne, France. Her research focuses on the creative industries and institutions. She has published articles in academic journals including *Organization Studies*, *Journal of Business Research* and *Journal of Management Inquiry*.