THE ROLE OF EXEMPLARY ENTREPRENEURSHIP FOR THE PROJECTIFICATION OF SOCIETY IN GERMANY

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ABSTRACT

Large-scale projects in Germany are often delivered too late and with excessive costs. This is partly due to lagging projectification in the public sector and also because there is a lack of exemplary entrepreneurship. Therefore, this paper explores the role of exemplary entrepreneurship in the projectification of society in Germany, utilizing the example of Elon Musk and Tesla’s fourth Gigafactory near Berlin. Building on qualitative and quantitative research on the projectification of society in Germany with reference to institutional theory, findings from an explanatory case study are compared, and the insights are discussed. For instance, the reputation of the entrepreneur, Elon Musk, is that of an innovator who can overcome well-established rules in Germany and contribute to a significant acceleration of large-scale projects by making courageous decisions. Upcoming projects in Germany are already using Elon Musk’s success story as a role model for their own approach. Although this case study is only one example of a large-scale project managed in an entrepreneurial way and further case studies should explore the interrelationship, it shows that projectification of society in general and the performant realization of projects, in particular, can benefit from it. As a result, promising behaviors and approaches for implementing similar projects can be induced, providing a boost to the projectification of society overall.

KEYWORDS
Projectification, Society, Entrepreneurship, Germany, Tesla; Elon Musk, Infrastructure.
1. INTRODUCTION

With the increasing number of societal challenges, such as the pandemic and the climate crisis, the prevalence of projects is growing significantly. Not only in the economy but in all areas of our society, projects are seen as an opportunity to accomplish complex tasks. This process of increasing the use of projects and the concomitant alignment of a large part of activities with these projects is referred to as projectification and points towards a project society (Lundin et al., 2015). For the purpose of supporting and shaping this societal process, it is important to better understand the actors and institutional configurations involved.

Based on neo-institutional theory (Scott, 2014), this paper focuses on entrepreneurs as actors and shows how their entrepreneurship fosters the projectification of society through the mediating effect of cultural-cognitive institutions. This is particularly important for actors, who are currently under pressure to advance large-scale projects on the most constrained deadlines and budgets possible.

Research has been addressing the phenomenon of increasing projectification over more than 25 years (Kuura, 2020). In Germany, one of the first studies on projectification was conducted and it was found that more than 1/3 of value creation in the economy is generated in form of projects and that the share continues to rise at about 3% per year (Schopper et al., 2018). At the same time, it became clear that public administration in Germany is far behind when it comes to projects or projectification. This can be seen in the inferior performance of public infrastructure projects, such as Berlin Airport (Wagner and Radujkovic, 2022).

For a long time, however, it remained open which actors influence projectification and how the process of increasing projectification takes place. Institutional theory offers explanatory patterns, which are only gradually being employed in research for a better comprehension of the projectification. In this context, institutions can be understood as “regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive elements that, together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to social life” (Scott, 2014: 56). On the one hand, this definition emphasizes the stabilizing effect of institutions in social relations and as guiding the behavior of actors. On the other hand, activities in projects also affect institutions and change them over time (Söderlund und Sydow, 2019). Using the example of the German Project Management Association, it was possible to describe the interactions between this actor and various institutional elements on the projectification of society in Germany (Wagner et al., 2022). In this study, it became clear that not the associations have the most significant impact on the process of projectification, as emphasized in the literature, yet primarily exemplary entrepreneurs or enterprises via the mediating effect of cultural-cognitive institutions. However, there has been no research on the role of entrepreneurship in the projectification of society so far.

The case study on the construction of the Tesla Gigafactory in Grünheide near Berlin aims to illustrate the impact on public perception of large-scale projects in general and the effect on the projectification of society in particular. First, this contributes to a better understanding of the role of exemplary entrepreneurs in the projectification process. Second, it shows the cause-and-effect chain of this influence via cultural-cognitive institutions, and third, it
prepares the ground for further research with three research propositions. Finally, actors in the context of large-scale projects are shown how to effectively proceed. This introduction is followed by a brief outline of the theoretical background, a description of the research method, and the context of the case study. After that, the research results are presented and discussed in detail. The paper ends with a conclusion.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Projectification of society

When Christophe Midler (1995) coined the term ‘projectification’ more than 25 years ago, he had summarized his research at the automobile manufacturer Renault in the observation that not only had the number and importance of projects increased over time, but the organization had fundamentally changed. Not only was the capability to deliver projects significantly increased, but the role of project management had been elevated over the years and significant structural and cultural changes were noticeable.

In the following years, research was mainly concerned with the effects of projectification on organizations, before research then also became interested in projectification at the level of society (Jacobsson and Jalocha, 2021). Projectification at the level of society considers the long-term embedding of projects and use of temporary projects to address societal challenges, such as combating epidemics (Meinert and Whyte, 2014), projectifying public policies (Hodgson et al., 2019), and supporting innovative ventures (Auschra et al., 2019).

Although Jensen et al. (2016) proclaimed the projectification of everything, it has long been unclear how far projectification has progressed in different sectors. Research in Germany from 2013 suggests that more than one-third of value creation in the economy is performed through projects (Schöper et al., 2015), but only recent research on society as a whole has revealed that in Germany, public services, areas such as civic engagement, and arts, culture, and sports lag significantly behind in projectification (Wagner et al., 2022). However, it has remained unclear how the process of projectification takes place at the level of society, which actors are involved in it, and what impact certain actors have together with the respective societal institutions.

2.2 Impact of institutions on the projectification

Looking at projectification through Midler’s eyes, it’s all about transforming the organization to better embrace projects and project management. However, if the view is broadened, projectification can be understood as “processes of invoking projects as habitual, legitimate and performative responses,” with the main theoretical perspective being sociology (Packendorff and Lindgren, 2014). Projects take place in a complex social environment with various institutions. These institutions influence the behavior of all participants and are, in turn, influenced by the participants’ behavior themselves (Sydow and Söderlund, 2019).
Scott (2011) describes the institutional environment of globally executed construction projects in this way. In addition to the explicit requirements of regulative institutions, i.e., laws and national regulations for the execution of projects, which can be enforced by sanctions, if necessary, there are the normative institutions that describe an expectation for the performance in projects based on the current state of the art. Finally, he also illustrates cultural-cognitive institutions adopted and voluntarily applied through shared understanding, mimicking of best practices, or the adoption of shared beliefs.

Recent research on the influence of institutions on projectification has confirmed a clear link between the actors involved in the context of projects and the projectification of society. Thus, while research into the link has been called for before (Lundin et al., 2015), it was not until a qualitative study by Wagner et al. (2021) using the example of project management associations - and in particular, the German Project Management Association (GPM) - that first references were made. As a result, social actions of actors exert an influence on projectification via the various institutional elements, indirectly and mostly unconsciously. In a quantitative exploration of the relationship in Germany, it was then demonstrated that cultural-cognitive activities exert the most significant influence on projectification (Wagner et al., 2022). It was emphasized by the authors that it is not the ‘push’ of regulative and normative institutions that drives actors to engage in projects, but mainly the ‘pull’ of success stories through which this is achieved.

2.3 Actors, intermediaries and entrepreneurship

Projects take place in a social setting where different actors interact, thereby influencing the project itself and the immediate context. “The formation and operation of projects essentially relies on a societal infrastructure which is built on and around networks, localities, institutions and fields” (Graber, 2002: 211). Actors include individuals (e.g., project managers), organizations (e.g., client or contractor organizations), or institutional fields (e.g., networks of project partners) that share common values (Scott, 2011).

In the context of project dissemination, the literature also accentuates the role of intermediaries (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2018) who “facilitate or broker exchanges, or collect, organize and evaluate information so as to affect interaction among the principals” (Scott, 2010: 13). These can include professional associations, government organizations, consultants, and many more. The former, in particular, is said to have a significant impact on the implementation of projects and projectification (Lundin et al., 2015). Still, Wagner et al. (2022) have empirically found that exemplary entrepreneurs and enterprises have the highest impact on the projectification in society. They serve as role models for other actors who try to mimic the successful approaches.

Entrepreneurship can broadly be defined as “changes in existing practices and processes, or the establishment of new activities that lead to changes in the economy and society” (Kuura et al., 2014: 216). Entrepreneurship emerges through a series of events, often performed in a temporary project form (Lindgren and Packendorf, 2011). Kuura and Lundin (2019) characterize the coordination as an ‘orchestration’ or even a ‘choreography’. It emerges through the interaction of several people in or beyond an organization. Often
entrepreneurship is associated with creating a new venture; however, it can also be a creative act at an advanced stage of the enterprise. An innovative product may emerge, or the institutional context may be transformed by it (Kuura et al., 2014).

2.4 Agency, institutional work and change

Finally, the question remains to what extent or how actors affect their institutional environment through their social behavior. In the recent past, exceptional actors, such as Elon Musk, have acted as disruptors in various industries, overriding the existing rules through their unbridled assertiveness. This may also be due to the fact that overly determinant institutions “leave little or no room for agency – the ability of human actors to intervene and to make a difference in the institutional scaffolding” (Scott, 2011: 60).

There are different perspectives in the literature on how institutional change can happen. On the one hand, it can be generated by exogenous shocks, such as an economic emergency, or on the other hand by incremental change through the institutional work of actors. Institutional work is defined as “the purposive action of individuals and organizations aimed at creating, maintaining and disrupting institutions” (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006: 215). This can happen through the expression and transmission of own success stories, through the undermining of existing assumptions and beliefs, or through disassociating moral foundations. This is particularly attributed to the agency of entrepreneurs, who are convinced that they can only assert their own interests by radically changing the rules of the game and rigid social and economic structures (Beckert, 1999).

3. RESEARCH METHOD AND CONTEXT

For this paper, an explanatory case study was conducted on the research question, “how does an exemplary entrepreneur impact the projectification of society.” It was built on qualitative and quantitative research on the state of projectification in society, the interactions between societal institutions and specific actors, and their impact on the process of projectification (Wagner et al., 2021; Wagner et al., 2022).

3.1 Research method

This research applies a case study research approach as it investigates “a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in depth and within its real-world context” (Ying, 2018:15). At the same time, the boundaries and the interrelations are not evident. Explanatory case studies are used whenever it is desired to explore cause-and-effect relationships and derive theoretical explanations from them (Lune and Berg, 2017). The choice of a case study approach benefits from the prior availability of data collected in other empirical surveys. It seeks to understand, describe or illustrate a phenomenon, while the researcher is external to the research object and tries to contribute with a new understanding or propositions, guiding future research (Martinsuo and Huemann, 2021). As this case is particularly concerned with project narratives and their impact on the context, the case study specifically discusses these
narratives (Sergeeva and Winch, 2021) based on secondary data with their effects on the subject.

3.2 Case study design

The design of a case study is aimed at theory building and is therefore primarily interested in the interrelations and the context associated with the research question. “The purpose of the research is to develop theory, not to test it, and so theoretical (not random or stratified) sampling is appropriate. Theoretical sampling simply means that cases are selected because they are particularly suitable for illuminating and extending relationships and logic among constructs.” (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007: 27) Findings from previous research have highlighted the relationship between exemplary entrepreneurship and the projectification of society (Wagner et al., 2022). This relationship takes effect through mediating cultural-cognitive institutions, such as positive narratives associated with successful projects.

Since large-scale projects in Germany, such as the Berlin airport, tend to be remembered for their serious failures, an outstanding example in this country is the construction of the new Tesla Gigafactory in the immediate vicinity of Berlin, which was realized in record time and has received a lot of public attention. Above all, the CEO of Tesla, Elon Musk, plays a central role in achieving this. The case study therefore looks primarily at the strategic orientation of Tesla, at the outstanding mindset and behavior of the entrepreneur Musk, and also at selected approaches to the implementation of projects such as the factory development. Finally, it addresses the impact that can be observed in the context of current large-scale projects in Germany, such as the construction of off-loading stations for tankers carrying Liquified Natural Gas (LNG) located off the coast in the North of Germany.

3.3 The context of large-scale projects in Germany

Germany does not have a distinctive tradition in the realization of large-scale projects. Since German reunification, large projects have been implemented in transport infrastructure, energy, and public tenders. In a study, the Hertie School of Governance concludes that “large-scale projects, especially in infrastructure, are often finished late and over the initially planned cost. In Germany, this has been subject to heated controversy over the alleged waste of public money.” (Kostka and Anzinger, 2015: 2). In addition to the general difficulties in dealing with complex projects (Flyvbjerg, 2017), the lack of competence in the public administration regarding commissioning or supervising infrastructure projects such as Berlin’s airport BER has been criticized in particular (Fiedler and Wendler, 2015). Wagner and Radujkovic (2022) reveal that a significant difference between the projectification in the construction industry and the public administration in Germany is one reason for the severe shortcomings in infrastructure projects. This also becomes clear when comparing the projectification of public administration in Germany with countries such as Croatia (Radujkovic and Misic, 2019).

At present, a number of complex projects are being implemented in Germany as part of the energy transition or in connection with the climate crisis, in addition to major projects within the framework of the Federal Transport Infrastructure Plan (Fichert, 2017).
4. TESLA’S FOURTH GIGAFACTORY IN GERMANY – A CASE STUDY

4.1 An unexpected decision for Tesla’s factory in Europe

On November 12, 2019, Elon Musk surprisingly announced his intention to build Tesla's European Gigafactory in the tranquil town of Grünheide near Berlin (Schleif, 2019). This came as a surprise because Tesla was entering a market with many competitors and also wanted to build this in a structurally weak region. At the same time, Tesla surprised with the statement that the factory wants to produce its first vehicles after only two years of construction time, a very daring statement for Germany and its obsession for regulations. A large number of critics of the project immediately took up positions, focusing in particular on the threats to the environment and the poor working conditions prevailing at Tesla in other countries. Nevertheless, politicians also saw the new jobs created by the project and the settlement of other companies in the automotive supply industry around the factory as an advantage. Others perceived the decision “as sensational come-back as one of the capitals of modern global industries.” (Bernhardt, 2020: 301). Tesla submitted construction plans for the factory to the state agency responsible for permitting just one month after announcing the location. Tesla also applied for the first pre-approvals, which allowed the company to start construction right away, even though final approval had not yet been granted (Schleif, 2019). This was considered particularly courageous, as there was a risk that Tesla would have to demolish everything at its own expense if the permit was not granted at the end of the process.

4.2 The particular role of Elon Musk for the project

When analyzing the decision and implementation of the fourth Gigafactory project in Germany, one will inevitably come across the role of Elon Musk, who is the CEO of Tesla, and his leadership traits. These traits are often referred to with the attribute ‘entrepreneurial,’ as Musk is described as a visionary, innovator and genius entrepreneur from the very outset of his career (Williams, 2022). “After all, the 46-year old, worth an estimated $21 billion, is the CEO of Space X; a co-founder, inventor, CEO product architect of Tesla Inc.; and co-founder and former chairman of Solar City and has it hands in half a dozen other business ventures” (Galek, 2018).

Nevertheless, his leadership style is the subject of controversy. On the one hand, he is described as a born leader who is able to foresee the future. He is constantly optimistic about the predictions for his companies and their development, is a genuine risk-taker and always thinks big when it comes to the goals he sets for the company (Gayathri and Kumari, 2019). On the other hand, Musk is also known for his micro-management (Dudovskiy, 2021). He is interested in every detail himself and reports staying overnight and tackling production problems himself. Musk is described as a workaholic, but he also expects his managers and the employees to perform above and beyond the norm and thus runs the risk of overstraining them. “Musk occasionally set impracticable enlarge targets instead of reasonable goal in an effort to accomplish it. That means, sometimes Musk believes in the
‘Think Big’ concept of goal setting… his senior leadership team, even of they have the experience, they wouldn’t dare to speak up against him” (Khan, 2021: 6).

Any announcement of news from Elon Musk typically causes a stir in the media and the business world. Thus, he can push the value of his company steeply upwards with his tweets on Twitter, or achieve exactly the opposite with it. His media presence and the impact he makes with it is a key success factor for his companies and projects. It is reported that Musk carefully studies the reports about the products of his ventures and includes them in their further development (Galek, 2018). He immediately puts ideas into practice, even if there are potential risks or resistance. In doing so, formal procedures or methods of project realization are unimportant to him, or even counterproductive to the rapid implementation of his plans. “Musk seems to approach running a business much as he'd approach a complex engineering project: Figure out what works and do that, even if it doesn't make sense to anyone else” (James, 2022).

This appears to be the exact opposite of the attitude in a highly regulated country where there are a plethora of procedures, and authorizations for implementing projects in the public sphere. In Germany, it is precisely the procedures of public administration, which are geared to routine and assurance, that prevent projects from being implemented quickly and adaptively, as the example of Berlin's airport project has impressively shown (Wagner and Radujkovic, 2022). “Temporary organizations constitute vehicles for flexible, fast and innovative problem solving and intervention. Simultaneously, they challenge the need for policy continuity and sustainability…” (Sjöblom et al., 2013: 3). Precisely because of the contradictory institutional logics (Winch and Maytorena-Sanchez, 2020) of the approach taken in the case of the fourth Tesla Gigafactory, it is worth taking a look at the actors in the context of the project, the controversies that arise in the realization of the plant, and the extent to which this can guide action for other projects or the projectification in Germany.

4.3 Tesla in Germany – The new kid on the block

Pioneers such as Benz, Horch and Daimler have associated Germany with the development and construction of vehicles more than any other country, even though the time of the pioneers dates back more than 120 years (Wagner, 2021). Today, automotive manufacturers and their suppliers are an established industry with nearly 800,000 employees, generating annual sales of more than 440 billion euros and also playing a major role in exports. Tesla, which was founded in California in 2003, looks like a new startup that still has to learn how to develop and manufacture vehicles and bring them to the market. However, in the summer of 2020, Tesla's market capitalization overtook that of Toyota and at that time was worth significantly more than all the major car manufacturers in Germany combined. There are a number of reasons for this. Tesla is therefore being followed with great attention by all its market peers. The Volkswagen Group, for example, praised Tesla’s announcement that it would build a factory in Germany and at the same time announced further efforts to expand e-mobility (Schleif, 2019).

What accounts for Tesla's success? On the one hand, Tesla's products and services are in tune with the Zeitgeist and meet the demands of society and politics for environmentally
friendly mobility. Influenced by the entrepreneurial spirit of the Silicon Valley, Tesla and its current CEO, Elon Musk, are challenging everything that has been of importance in the traditional industry. Thus, Tesla has not only developed new concepts for the vehicle, the batteries, marketing and sales of vehicles, strongly subjected its products and manufacturing to the paradigm of digitalization, and offered previously immature services up to and including autonomous driving. For example, Tesla offers its customers ‘over-the-air’ software updates and, in the meantime, semi-autonomous driving (Clausen and Olteanu, 2020). However, Tesla has now also set standards for production, among other things by acquiring specialists in plant engineering, automating and digitizing manufacturing processes, and setting up fast-charging stations, the so-called super-chargers, which give Tesla a clear competitive advantage.

On the other hand, Tesla is also strongly influenced by Musk, who became the main shareholder and then CEO in 2008, who likes to swim against the tide as an entrepreneur, takes risks and has become a media star thanks to the success of his ventures (Gayathri and Kumari, 2019). Musk is personally committed to the company and spends many hours on the factory floor as a trouble-shooter. He stays over nights at the factory just to be on site and to keep production running. When Musk introduces innovative ideas to the company, they are implemented rapidly without much debate. However, a lot also comes down to Musk and it is reported that he is bad at delegating. As an entrepreneur, he is demanding, self-confident, performance-oriented and determined. However, he also demands this from his employees and managers; and fires them if they do not meet his standards (Clausen and Olteanu, 2020). However, ‘customers have attached a ‘coolness’ factor to the company, the products and to Elon Musk himself’ (Han, 2021: 577). Hence, Musk is seen as one of Tesla's key competitive advantages, helping to ensure that Tesla is positively perceived by the public, is constantly innovating, and is thus able to maintain a sustainable competitive edge over its rivals.

The vision of Tesla is to “become one of the best automobile companies of the 21st century by driving the global transition towards e-vehicles” (Clausen and Olteanu, 2020: 24). Tesla is thus deliberately positioning itself as a high-end manufacturer and dealer in the promising segment of sustainable mobility. To sustain growth, Tesla must build capacity globally to serve markets with vehicles, batteries and services. After Tesla's first factory in Fremont, California, reached its capacity limits, new factories were built in China, the USA and Germany. However, Tesla has also been affected by the pandemic. Although Tesla weathered the crisis period well at the beginning of the pandemic thanks to a high order backlog, Musk recently announced that “the company's Austin and Berlin factories… burning through cash faster than production because of battery production issues and delays at ports in China” (Santana, 2022). Nonetheless, as Tesla expanded its capacity globally, it also expanded its market share, leading the competition by a wide margin with more than 900,000 electric vehicles in 2021.
4.4 Building a Gigafactory in Germany

Since the oil price shock in the 1970s, the automotive industry has been growing and realizing a multitude of projects due to expansion of product portfolios as well as production capacities (Wagner, 2021). Due to the challenges of climate change, projects are realized to offer eco-friendly products, drives and manufacturing concepts. Tesla was an early adopter of electric drives; however, the established car manufacturers are now catching up rapidly and challenging Tesla in the market. That's why it was important to Elon Musk to get the fourth Gigafactory in Germany up and running as quickly as possible. His first announcement was that, following the start of construction in the first quarter of 2020, the first vehicles should roll off the production line as early as the third quarter of 2021. This was considered completely unrealistic in Germany, as planning and approval processes take much longer here than in the USA or China. However, the fact that Tesla was able to realize the project two years after the start of construction and within the set budget of nearly 5 billion euros raised a lot of attention (Barnstorf, 2022).

What factors led to the success of the project? On the one hand, the public's interest in the project and the creation of several thousand jobs in an economically rather disadvantaged area. Politicians and the public sector were flattered by Tesla's choice of location and gave the project massive support (Deters, 2022). For example, permitting times and funding commitments were issued much more quickly than in comparable cases (Bürgerinitiative Grünheide, 2022). The planning documents submitted by Tesla at the beginning were inadequate and had to be significantly improved. This alone should have led to a restart of the entire planning process, but was flexibly resolved. Although more than 1,200 objections were received from local citizens in the usual approval process, especially with regard to the clearing of trees and the gigantic consumption of water in an area with a notorious water shortage, the approval was finally granted, and the factory thus started operation (Barnstorf, 2022).

Another success factor certainly has been the way Tesla builds its Gigafactories. The process, referred to as ‘smart scale-up,’ relies on a modular approach to the design and construction of the factory, which enhances speed and simplicity of construction. In the process, the modules can be replicated and are continuously improved. Comparable to the agile way of working, which uses Minimum Viable Products (MVPs), a factory can thus be built in several iterations and adapted to changing conditions at any time (Flyvbjerg, 2021b). Moreover, the production itself at Tesla is also smartly designed. This includes robots taking over large chunks of the production process and the automation of manufacturing steps and logistics processes in Tesla's Gigafactories (Bogue, 2022). Finally, Tesla's selection of the site for its fourth Gigafactory near Berlin is a logistically convenient location that, on the one hand, facilitates the delivery of materials and the removal of vehicles throughout Europe, and, at the same time, Tesla's factory also goes a step further than conventional automakers by integrating battery production into the vehicle factory (Cooke, 2020). At the same time, Tesla's goal is to equip its factories with the latest standards of environmental technology and ultimately produce emissions-free. However, this goal has not yet been achieved at the Berlin factory and is to be pursued step by step.
4.5 The impact on other projects in Germany

The speed with which Tesla has implemented such a complex project in Germany is groundbreaking for other large-scale projects in Germany, which attract attention primarily due to schedule and cost overruns. The German government's representative for small and medium-sized businesses is convinced that Tesla can not only shake up the German car market, but also revolutionize the approval procedures for industrial plants, i.e. accelerating the procedures and above all reducing bureaucratic obstacles. Other experts even call the project a blessing for Germany as a business location because it promotes entrepreneurial courage and Tesla thus provides a kind of development aid to the corporations in Germany (Kersting und Neuerer, 2020).

Due to the crisis in Ukraine and the sanctions against Russia, Germany needs access to other sources of gas supply as quickly as possible. To this end, in June 2022 the German government approved a law to accelerate the expansion of terminals for liquefied natural gas (LNG) in the North Sea off the German coast. This will bring the previously rather lengthy approval processes down to the minimum requirements of the European Union and enable the realization of projects for floating storage and regasification units (FSRUs) within just over half a year (Zukunft Gas, 2022). The projects of Tesla's competitors in Germany are also coming under pressure. For example, Volkswagen, is building several Gigafactories in Europe, which will consume billions and should reach a total capacity of 240 GWh. Despite standardization and a similarly scaled factory setup, Volkswagen plans to spend up to three years building a factory (Neißendorfer, 2022). However, there are also critical voices that do not see Tesla's Gigafactory project as a model to follow. They say that Germany needs a balance between the speed of construction and the involvement of the public in order to be able to complete the gigantic transformation quickly enough. Doubts and objections should be considered carefully, and, despite the speed of the projects, necessary decisions should be made in a democratic and objectively well-founded manner (Jacobson, 2022).

5. DISCUSSION

With this research work, the focus was placed on entrepreneurs as actors who, with their undertakings, exert an influence on the projectification of society. This was based on previous empirical studies (Wagner et al., 2022), which found a mediating effect of cultural-cognitive institutions in this context. By examining the construction of Tesla's Gigafactory near Berlin and the role of its CEO in this context, it was possible to illustrate that this project was realized significantly faster than other projects in Germany. Furthermore, it could be shown that the project also had positive impact on other large-scale projects in Germany.

The innovative and entrepreneurial image of Elon Musk and of his ventures played a key role in realizing the project in time and budget. Germany's Minister of Economy and Energy is quoted saying that “in a time with so much grief it needs courage and the strength to implement things that one thinks are right with full conviction. For this, one must then also sometimes bear the political and financial risk.” (Deters, 2022). He is probably deliberately
not saying that the world needs more of his kind, but “a little bit more of Musk's ilk could certainly help.”

Furthermore, it had a clear impact on politics, public administration and major competitors in Germany to change existing institutional arrangements, e.g., by reducing the administrative burdens for such projects. The example of the fourth Gigafactory in Berlin illustrates that when projects are directed with a clear, entrepreneurial vision and capability, a significant competitive advantage may result (Han, 2021). The first research proposition for an exploration in future research is based on Lin and Yi (2021), Imran and Aldass (2020) as well as Miao et al. (2019):

- **Research proposition 1:** *Entrepreneurial leadership in the context of organizations and their projects enables outstanding performance.*

Public perception through an appropriate narrative (Sergeeva and Winch, 2021) helps not only during the shaping (Smith and Winter, 2010) and delivery of projects (Bohn and Braun, 2021), yet also inspires other stakeholders in the spirit of the project, thus positively influencing projects (Winch and Maytorena-Sanchez, 2020). This is one of the equally remarkable observations in the case of Elon Musk and the new Tesla Gigafactory. Thus, we formulate our second research proposition as follows:

- **Research proposition 2:** *Positively charged project narratives help not only in shaping and delivering projects, but also in changing the institutional context for similar projects.*

Empirical evidence suggests that the projectification of society is supported by the activities of exemplary entrepreneurs and companies such as Musk and Tesla (Wagner et al., 2022). Other entrepreneurs follow these promising approaches with their own activities (Beckert, 1999). Entrepreneurial behavior in projects is thus field-configuring (Bohn and Braun, 2021) and helps new products, processes and approaches to a breakthrough. For further exploration we propose our third research proposition:

- **Research proposition 3:** *Projects can have a tangible impact on public perceptions, opinions, and practices, change them significantly, and thus be field-configuring.*

As with any case study research, this one is also subject to a number of limitations. The example of Tesla's Gigafactory in Germany and the involvement of Elon Musk in this was only one out of many examples. Future research should investigate other cases and also conduct comparative studies in other countries based on their institutional conditions.
6. CONCLUSION

With the case study of Tesla's fourth Gigafactory in Germany, we exemplified the role of exemplary entrepreneurship for the projectification of society. The study describes that a high profile leader, such as Elon Musk, with a successful company and venture can pave the way for a rethinking of project delivery practices through a change in public perception of such projects and fosters a fresh look at what is possible. This example increases the pressure on public administration in Germany to rethink institutional requirements for large-scale projects and encourages other actors in the country to approach their projects in a different way, as shown by the example of the construction of LNG terminals in northern Germany. In summary, the experience of entrepreneurship clears the way for projects and promotes the projectification of society.

Our research proposals pave the way for further analysis of the interrelationships. Thus, it will be helpful to conduct further case studies and prove the cause-effect relationships between the exemplary entrepreneurship and the projectification of society. In general, it is also interesting to see how the leadership characteristics of leaders in the economy differ from those in politics or public administration and what impact this has on projectification in the sector. Since Elon Musk and Tesla are seen as being associated with the Silicon Valley, it could also be interesting for researchers to examine cultural factors and their influence on the behavior of leaders and, if necessary, to conduct international comparative studies.

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