

PROCESS STUDIES OF CHANGE IN ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

Sponsor: Academy of Management Journal

Description: Guest Editors: Ann Langley, Clive Smallman, Haridimos Tsoukas, and Andrew H. Van de Ven

This special research forum is devoted to research aimed at understanding process questions about how and why things emerge, develop, grow, or terminate over time – as distinct from variance questions focusing on co-variations among dependent and independent variables. Process questions address issues that span or interconnect the domains of AOM Divisions. They include studies that examine how and why phenomena pertaining to individuals, groups, organizations, and larger industry networks or communities develop and change over time. For example, papers might examine the sequences of events or steps that unfold over time in the development of individuals' decisions, jobs and careers, organizational innovation, transformation, and relationships, or larger social, technical, and economic developments. We seek papers that focus on the temporal order and sequence in which selected managerial or organizational phenomena develop and change over time, and that advance our understanding of process theories of organization and management (as discussed by Van de Ven & Poole, 1995).

Contributions may take a range of forms and may focus on different levels of analysis, but they should take temporal developments seriously and examine how phenomena develop and change. As Tsoukas and Chia (2002) noted, processes of change are continuous and inherent to organizing. Submissions to the Special Research Forum may address emergent, improvisational and self-organizing forms of adaptation and novelty. Given the ubiquity of innovations in contemporary organizations, research that examines how inventions are created and what processes unfold as they are developed and implemented as innovations are also invited.

More generally, potential research topics might include but are not limited to:

- Process studies of individuals within organizational contexts. For example, process studies might address career transitions, organizational identification, and individual learning. Contributors might also examine how individuals entrepreneurially generate change, as well as how they cope with initiatives that are imposed upon them. An interesting example of a process study at the individual level of analysis is Pratt, Rockman and Kaufman's (2006) examination of the construction of professional identity among medical residents.
- Process studies of group development. At this level studies might include examinations of how groups (e.g., task forces, work groups, management teams) emerge, evolve or dissolve over time. They might also examine how new forms of work organization are incorporated into work groups and how groups evolve when they are merged into larger entities. An interesting example is Repenning and Sterman's (2002) study of the dynamics surrounding process improvement teams.
- Process studies of organizational innovation and change. Studies might examine micro-processes of how individuals innovate, improvise, adapt, and learn as well as more macro processes of how organizational start-ups, reorganizations, mergers, alliances, and crisis-induced changes unfold over time. Two examples of process studies at the organization level are Balogun and Johnson's (2004) study of how middle managers make sense of change as it evolves and Plowman, Baker, Beck, Kulkarni, Solansky and Travis's (2007) study of the emergence of accidental radical change in a religious organizations.
- Meso studies of how individual, group, organization, and industry-level processes co-evolve over time. How and when do individual processes aggregate into organizational changes and vice-versa? Is it through processes of interpretation and action at different levels (Orlikowski, 1996)? How do stable routines at one level induce changes in routines at another level (Feldman, 2000)? How do managerial intentions and actions change over time and how are they reinterpreted by various stakeholders and organizational levels

over time? How are industry level processes or field level processes intertwined with processes within organizations to generate new outcomes?

Process studies necessarily require temporally grounded data. These data may be constituted through tracing phenomena backwards in time as in Plowman et al.'s (2006) study or by following them forward in real time as in Balogun and Johnson (2004) and Pratt et al. (2006). Generally, such research will also tend to draw on multiple sources of qualitative and quantitative data, as might be obtained from interviews and surveys, real time observations, documents and archival records. Statistical and narrative forms of longitudinal analysis and theorizing are also commonly used (Langley, 1999; Pentland, 1999) ranging from qualitative and narrative analysis to more quantitative methods that render deeper understanding of complex temporal relationships (Abbott, 1990; Poole, Van de Ven, Dooley, & Holmes, 2000). We also welcome research that innovates by drawing on novel data sources and analytic strategies (both qualitative and quantitative).

As in the case of all contributions to Academy of Management Journal, papers accepted for this Special Research Forum must be empirically rich, methodologically rigorous, and theoretically insightful. In other words, process research studies must reach beyond surface description to develop some form of understanding of dynamic phenomena that speak to situations other than the empirical settings examined.

Paper Procedure:

Submissions are due no later than August 31, 2010. Contributors should follow the direction for manuscript submission described in "Information for Contributors" in the front of each issue of AMJ and at http://aom.pace.edu/amjnew/contributor_information.html.

For questions about submitting to this Special Research Forum, contact AMJ's Managing Editor, Michael Malgrande at mmalgrande@pace.edu. For questions regarding the content of this Special Research Forum, write to one of the guest editors:

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Call for papers

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