

## Call for Papers

### Fourth International Symposium on Process Organization Studies

**Theme: Language and Communication @ Work: Discourse, Narrativity and Organizing**

[www.process-symposium.com](http://www.process-symposium.com)

**21-23 June 2012, Kos, Greece**

**Conveners:**

**François Cooren**, Université de Montréal, Canada ([f.cooren@umontreal.ca](mailto:f.cooren@umontreal.ca))

**Eero Vaara**, Hanken School of Economics, Finland ([eero.vaara@hanken.fi](mailto:eero.vaara@hanken.fi))

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**Haridimos Tsoukas**, University of Cyprus, Cyprus & University of Warwick, UK ([process.symposium@gmail.com](mailto:process.symposium@gmail.com))

**Keynote Speakers:**

**David Boje**, Professor of Management, New Mexico State University, USA, author of *Storytelling Organizations*

**Lillie Chouliaraki**, Professor in Media and Communications, London School of Economics and Political Science, UK, co-author of *Discourse in Late Modernity*

**Jonathan Potter**, Professor of Discourse Analysis, Loughborough University, UK, co-author of *Discursive Psychology*

**Rationale: What is a Process Perspective?**

Process Organization Studies (PROS) is a way of studying organizations that unfolds from process metaphysics – the worldview that sees processes, rather than substances, as the basic forms of the universe. A process view rests on an anti-dualist and relational ontology, namely the recognition that everything that is has no existence apart from its relation to other things. A process orientation prioritizes activity over product, change over persistence, novelty over continuity, expression over determination. Becoming, change, flux as well as creativity, disruption, and indeterminism are the main themes of a process worldview.

Seeing process as fundamental, such an approach does not deny the existence of states, events, and entities, but insists on unpacking them to reveal the complex processes - sequences of activities and transactions - that are involved in and contribute to their constitution. As process philosopher Nicholas Rescher notes, “the idea of discrete “events” dissolves into a manifold of processes which themselves dissolve into further processes”. A process point of view invites us to acknowledge, rather than reduce, the complexity of the world and, in that sense, it is animated by what philosopher Stephen Toulmin calls an “ecological style” of thinking.

### **Purpose, Venue, and Organization**

The aim of the Symposium is to consolidate, integrate, and further develop ongoing efforts to advance a sophisticated process perspective in organization and management studies.

PROS is an annual event organized in conjunction with the new annual series *Perspectives on Process Organization Studies* (Series Editors: Ann Langley and Haridimos Tsoukas), published by Oxford University Press, and it takes place in a Mediterranean island, in June each year. Topics so far have included: “Sensemaking and Organizing” (First Symposium, Cyprus, 2009), “Constructing Identities in and around Organizations” (Second Symposium, Rhodes, Greece, 2010), and “How Matter Matters: Objects, Artifacts and Materiality in Organization Studies” (Third Symposium, Corfu, Greece, 2011) (details can be seen at [www.process-symposium.com](http://www.process-symposium.com)).

Around 70 papers are usually accepted, following a review of submitted abstracts by the conveners. Authors of accepted papers will have the opportunity to interact in depth and share insights in a stimulating, relaxing, and scenic environment.

The Fourth Symposium will take place on **21-23 June 2012**, at Helona Resort (<http://www.helona-resort.com>), Kos, Greece. The Symposium venue, comfortable, beautiful, and situated by the sea, will provide an ideal setting for participants to relax and engage in authentic and creative dialogues.

The Symposium is organized in two tracks:

1. One is the General Track, which includes papers that explore a variety of organizational phenomena from a process perspective.

More specifically, although not necessarily consolidated under a process metaphysical label, several strands in organization and management studies have adopted a more or less process-oriented perspective over the years. Karl Weick’s persistent emphasis on *organizing* and the important role of sensemaking in it is perhaps the best known process approach. Henry Mintzberg’s, James March’s, Andrew Pettigrew’s, and Andrew Van de Ven’s work on the making of strategy, decision making, organizational change, and innovation respectively, also shows a clear awareness of the importance of process-related issues. Current studies that take an explicitly performative (or enactivist or

relational or practice-based) view of organizations have similarly adopted, in varying degrees, a process vocabulary and have further refined a process sensibility. Indeed, the growing use of the gerund (-ing) indicates the desire to move towards dynamic ways of understanding organizational phenomena, especially in a fast-moving, inter-connected, globalized world.

Since a process worldview is not a doctrine but an orientation, it can be developed in several different directions, exploring a variety of topics in organizational research. For example, traditional topics such as organizational design, leadership, trust, coordination, change, innovation, learning and knowledge, accountability, communication, authority, technology, etc, which have often been studied as “substances”, from a process perspective can be approached as situated sequences of activities and complexes of processes unfolding in time. A process view treats organizational phenomena not as *faits accomplis* but as (re)created through interacting agents embedded in discursive practices, whose actions are mediated by institutional, linguistic and objectual artifacts.

2. The second is the Thematic Track, which includes papers addressing the particular theme of the Symposium every year.

For **2012** the theme is: **Language and Communication @ Work: Discourse, Narrativity and Organizing.**

A description of this theme and its importance follows.

With the growing influence of discursive perspectives in general (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 2005; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Potter, 1996), and of research on organizational discourse (Grant, Hardy, Osrick, Phillips & Putnam, 2004), business discourse (Bargiela-Chiappini, 2009) and narrative perspectives on organizing (Czarniawska & Gagliardi, 2003; Boje, 2001; Rhodes & Brown, 2005), organizational scholars are focusing increasing attention on the *constitutive* role that language and communication play in organizational processes (Putnam & Nicotera, 2009; Taylor & Van Every, 2000). This view conceptualizes language and communication as bringing organization into being in every instant, and it is therefore inherently sympathetic to a process perspective.

However, our understanding of the role of language in unfolding organizational processes and as a part of organizational action is still limited. This is partly due to the tendency in discourse analysis to focus on language alone, without explicit linkages to other organizational practices, activities and actions (Fairclough, 2005). Moreover, analyses elucidating the agency and power of texts and discourses in specific organizational contexts have been scarce (Cooren, Taylor & Van Every, 2006). Thus, there is a paucity of knowledge of the ways in which language and communication enable, constrain or otherwise form a part of unfolding organizational activity.

For this Fourth International Symposium, we seek empirical and/or conceptual submissions that consider language and communication *at work*. With the metaphor

*work*, we wish to inspire scholars to examine language and communication as an inherent part of ongoing organizational processes at various levels of analysis. In particular, we encourage scholars to explore the question of language and communication as constitutive of *work*; to analyze how language and communication *actually work*, i.e. do things in the context of organizing; and/or to examine the role of language and communication as part of *strategic and institutional work* in and around organizational phenomena.

First, it is useful to depart from abstract and static considerations about organization to concentrate on communicational practices and activities that constitute the daily life of organizations or capture the ways in which they change over time. In keeping with research movements such as workplace studies, distributed cognition, activity theory, actor network theory, or strategy as practice, the challenge is to better understand the role of concrete instances of organizational work as part of ongoing organizational processes. Submissions can focus on cultural, cognitive, artifactual, ideological or technological aspects of work as long as the communicational dimension of these activities is scrutinized and highlighted. Work activities can include meetings, negotiations, coordination, transactions, operations, services, etc. under the form of face-to-face or mediated communication. It would also be important to shed more light on how specific tools and technologies facilitate, constrain or otherwise shape these discursive and communicative processes (Orlikowski, 2007).

Second, we are interested in the organizing properties of communication and language, whether from a narrative, interactional or discursive point of view (Cooren, 2000, 2010; Taylor & Van Every, 2000). Submissions can, for instance, concentrate on the role documents, policies or procedures play in the ongoing enactment of organizational forms (Cooren, 2004, Kuhn, 2008), but also on how narratives can play a crucial role in the way things get organized (Boje, 1991; 1995; 2001; Czarniawska & Gagliardi, 2003; Robichaud, Giroux & Taylor, 2004). Such analyses can draw from the recent developments of the communicative constitution of organization (CCO) movement (Putnam & Nicotera, 2009), but might also be critical of its shortcomings and limits.

Third, we are also looking for studies that advance our understanding of the role of language and communication in strategic and institutional work in and around organizations and organizational phenomena. The processes of strategic change can be studied from a discursive or narrative perspective. Such studies can, for example, focus on storytelling in change (Boje & Rosile, 2008; Sonenshein, 2010) or highlight the dialectical or dialogical dynamics in change processes (Vaara and Monin, 2010). Texts and discourses play a central role in institutionalization processes (Phillips, Lawrence & Hardy, 2004) and institutional work (Hardy & Maguire, 2008). This is the case especially with legitimation and naturalization that involve all kinds of rhetorical and discursive practices processes (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005; Vaara et al., 2006).

More generally, we are looking for studies that concentrate on one or several aspects of organizing by showing how communication, discourse and narrativity are constitutive of what is taking place. These analyses can focus on micro-level instances of

communication or discourse, or more macro-level processes of organizing or change. We welcome both theoretical and empirical explorations from a variety of theoretical and disciplinary traditions. We hope that this Symposium will inspire not only organization theorists but also scholars of communication studies, strategic practices, information technology and other fields whose researchers are interested in the role of language, discourse, narrative and dialogical activity in organizing. Our only requirement is that the contributions are thought-provoking, innovative, focused, and rigorous.

Following a rigorous review process, a selection of papers will appear in the third volume of *Perspectives on Process Organization Studies* in 2013.

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### Submissions

Interested participants must submit to Haridimos Tsoukas ([process.symposium@gmail.com](mailto:process.symposium@gmail.com)) an abstract of about 1000 words for their proposed contribution by **January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2012**. The submission must be made via email and it must be a Word attachment. It should contain authors' names, institutional affiliations, email and postal addresses, and indicate the track for which the submission is made (General or Thematic), while the subject matter line of the email should indicate "Process Symposium". Authors will be notified of acceptance or otherwise by **March 5th, 2012**. Full papers will be submitted by **May 31st, 2012**.