

Call for Papers

Sixth International Symposium on Process Organization Studies

Theme: Organizational routines: How they are created, maintained, and changed

General process-oriented and theme-focused papers are invited

www.process-symposium.com



19-21 June 2014

Elysium Resort & Spa, Rhodes, Greece, www.elysium.gr

Conveners:

Jennifer Howard-Grenville, University of Oregon, USA (jhg@uoregon.edu)

Claus Rerup, Western University, Canada, (crerup@ivey.uwo.ca)

Ann Langley, HEC Montreal, Canada (ann.langley@hec.ca)

Haridimos Tsoukas, University of Cyprus, Cyprus & University of Warwick, UK
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Keynote Speakers:

Paul Dourish, Professor of Informatics, University of California, Irvine, USA, author of *Where the Action Is: The Foundations of Embodied Interaction*

Martha Feldman, Johnson Chair for Civic Governance and Public Management, Professor of Social Ecology, Political Science, Business and Sociology, University of California, Irvine, USA

Bob Mesle, Professor of Philosophy & Religion, Graceland University, USA, author of *Process-Relational Philosophy: An Introduction to Alfred North Whitehead*

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 a 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 stasis, open-endedness 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 called 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 annual series *Perspectives on Process Organization Studies*, published by Oxford University Press, and it takes place on a Mediterranean island, in June every year. Topics so far have included: “Sensemaking and Organizing” (First Symposium, Cyprus, 2009), “Constructing Identities in and Around Organizations” (Second Symposium, Rhodes, Greece, 2010), “How Matter Matters: Objects, Artifacts and Materiality in Organization Studies” (Third Symposium, Corfu, Greece, 2011), “Language and Communication @ Work: Discourse, Narrativity and Organizing” (Fourth Symposium, Kos, Greece), and “The emergence of novelty in organizations” (Fifth Symposium, Chania, Greece) (details can be seen at www.process-symposium.com).

Around 90 papers are usually accepted, following a review of submitted abstracts by the conveners. PROS is renowned for offering authors and participants the opportunity to interact in depth, exchange constructive comments, and share insights in a stimulating, relaxing, and scenic environment.

The **Sixth Symposium** will take place on **19-21 June 2014**, at Elysium Resort & Spa, Rhodes, Greece (www.elysium.gr). The Symposium venue, modern, comfortable, and situated in a beautiful location 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 – a general track and a thematic track. Each is described below.

1. The General Track 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, routines, 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 sociomaterial practices, whose actions are mediated by institutional, linguistic and objectual artifacts.

2. The Thematic Track includes papers addressing the particular theme of the Symposium every year.

For **2014** the theme is: **Organizational routines: How they are created, maintained and changed**

A description of this theme and its importance follows.

Organizational routines have only quite recently been investigated from a process perspective. Defined as "repetitive, recognizable patterns of interdependent organizational actions carried out by multiple actors" (Feldman & Pentland, 2003: 95), routines were once thought to be fairly stable, standard operating procedures (Cyert & March, 1963; Nelson & Winter, 1982). Feldman (2000) challenged this understanding by proposing that routines can change continuously, opening a rich conversation that focuses on how actors actually perform routines, and with what consequences for the evolution – or stability – of the routine over time (Howard-Grenville, 2005; Rerup & Feldman, 2011; Turner & Rindova, 2012; Zbaracki & Bergen, 2010). Work in this tradition explores the mutual constitution of routines through two aspects or "parts" – the ostensive aspect which is the "abstract, generalized idea of the routine," and the performative aspect which consists of "specific actions, by specific people, in specific places and times" (Feldman & Pentland, 2003: 101). Indeed, recent work, such as a special issue dedicated to exploring

the microfoundations of routines (Felin, Foss, Heimeriks & Madsen, 2012), builds on this perspective, firmly placing the study of organizational routines in the ‘camp’ of process studies.

Yet, much remains to be understood about routines from a process perspective, including the role specific individuals play in creating, sustaining and changing routines (Salvato, 2009; Dionysiou & Tsoukas, 2013). For instance, there is relatively little published empirical work that explores how the ostensive-performative perspective, with its focus on the ways in which the “parts” of a routine interact, can enrich the perspective on routines that dominates in strategy, which regards routines as “whole entities” and is concerned with their role in shaping organizational performance (Parmigiani & Howard-Grenville, 2011). An emphasis on studying routines as “entities or black boxes” at fairly aggregate levels of analysis (Salvato & Rerup, 2011) has gradually removed individuals, interpersonal connections, and their coordinating role from the conception of routines offered by the early Carnegie School (Gavetti, Levinthal, and Ocasio, 2007; Gavetti et al., 2012). Tracing how the various “parts” of a routine interrelate over time and space brings to view the micro processes that guide more macro level conceptions of organizational routines. More broadly, process theorizing offers many potential ways of enriching our understanding of organizational routines, and organizing in general, given routines’ centrality to organizational action.

Empirically tracing connections between various parts of routines across time and space is especially important because “[t]he separation of micro-organizational level work at the individual or group level from macro-organizational work at the organization ... level has left a need for an integrative theory of intra-organizational behavior” (Gavetti et al., 2012: 26). Process oriented research on organizational routines could contribute to such a theory.

In this year’s *thematic track*, we are interested in receiving conceptual, empirical and/or methodological submissions that address how organizational routines can be better understood *as* parts and processes, as well as how routines operate in relation to other processes of organizing (Weick, 1979; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005).

Topics may include but need not be limited to:

- The role of individual agency, coordination, and connection in the performance of routines, and their change or stability over time.
- Considerations of power and its role in routine performance. How do the centrality and/or marginality of actors shape their enactment of routines?
- How temporality (delay, co-occurrence, etc.) shapes the interplay of the performative and the ostensive.
- Ways to measure and assess variability in routines over time and space.
- How emotions influence the emergence, enactment and stability/change of routines.
- How ‘multiple ostensives’ are generated and sustained for a routine(s).
- How knowledgeable actors shape or tailor routine performances based on their experiences, aspirations, or expectations.
- The influence of culture (organizational or national) on how routines are enacted.
- The link between organizational memory and organizational routines.

- Connections and distinctions between different perspectives on micro-foundations of routines. Some scholars focus on the “whole” individual whereas other scholars focus on particular traits or “parts” of the individual. How can these traditions inform each other?
- Understanding how actors and organizations evaluate and adjust routines to address priorities. Are trade-offs experienced between fidelity, accuracy, speed or plausible action, and if so, how are these worked out?
- The ways in which routines unfold when considered as embedded within other organizational processes. Do ‘peripheral’ aspects of routines help make ‘core’ routines function?
- How routines emerge, develop, and (perhaps) eventually decay.
- How routines co-evolve with other, perhaps higher-level, ‘meta’ routines. What constitutes a meta routine?
- Routines as an important focal construct for understanding processes of organizing. What do we gain by studying routines as focal ‘elements’ of organizing?

References

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Submissions

Both general process-oriented papers and theme-focused papers are invited. Interested participants must submit to Haridimos Tsoukas (process.symposium@gmail.com) an abstract of about 1000 words for their proposed contribution by **January 31st, 2014** through the following link :

<http://www.process-symposium.com/abstractsubmitform.html>

The submission must be made through the link and the document should be submitted as an MS 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 3rd, 2014**. Full papers will be submitted by **May 31st, 2014**.

Limited financial assistance is possible for researchers unable to fund their participation in the Symposium.