Call for Papers

Thirteenth International Symposium on Process Organization Studies

Theme:
Organizing on the Precipice: Process Studies in Extreme Contexts

General process-oriented and theme-focused papers are invited

20-23 June 2022

Conveners:
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Keynote Speakers:
Beth Bechky, Seymour Milstein Professor of Ethics and Corporate Governance and Strategy. New York University, USA, author of *Blood, Powder and Residue: How Crime Labs Translate Evidence into Proof* (Princeton University Press, 2021)
Loïc Wacquant, Professor of Sociology, University of California, Berkeley, USA, author of *Body and Soul: Ethnographic Notebooks of An Apprentice-Boxer* (OUP, 2004)
Dan Zahavi, Professor of Philosophy, University of Copenhagen & University of Oxford, Co-editor-in-chief of *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences,* author of *Phenomenology: The Basics* (Routledge, 2018)

Rationale: What is Process Organization Studies?
Process Organization Studies (PROS) is a way of studying organizations that is grounded in process metaphysics – the worldview in which processes take precedence over substance. A process view: rests on a relational ontology, a performative epistemology, and a dynamic praxeology; focuses on becoming, change, and flux, and pays particular attention to forms of agency; prioritizes process over outcome, activity over product, novelty over stasis, open-endedness over determination; 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 process perspective in organization and management studies.

PROS is an annual event, organized in conjunction with the publication of the annual series *Perspectives on Process Organization Studies* (published by Oxford University Press), and it takes place in a Greek island or resort, in June every year. Details of all hitherto Symposia, including topics, conveners and keynote speakers, can be seen at www.process-symposium.com.

The **Thirteenth Symposium** will take place on **20-23 June 2022**, at the **Sheraton Rhodes Resort,** in the island of Rhodes, Greece (https://www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/rhosi-sheraton-rhodes-resort/?program=spg). The first day of the Symposium, **20th June,** will consist of the *Paper Development Labs* (for details see below).

The Symposium venue, comfortable, relaxing, and situated by the sea in one of the most beautiful Greek islands, will provide an ideal setting for participants to relax and engage in creative dialogues.

Around 140 papers are usually accepted, following a review of submitted abstracts by the conveners. PROS is renowned for offering participants the opportunity to interact in depth, exchange constructive comments, and share insights in a stimulating, relaxing, and scenic environment.

As is customary by now, the Symposium is organized in two tracks – a *General Track* and a *Thematic Track*. Each track 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 philosophical 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 organiz*ing* and the important role of sensemaking was an early and decisive contribution in the field. Early management and organizational research by Henry Mintzberg, Andrew Pettigrew and Andrew Van de Ven was also conducted from an explicitly process perspective. More recently, scholars such as Martha Feldman, Wanda Orlikowski, Paula Jarzabkowski, Robert Chia, Tor Hernes, Jennifer Howard-Grenville, Brian Pentland, Claus Rerup, and several others, have applied variations of process-related issues in their research. Current studies that take an explicitly performative (or enactivist/relational/practice-based) view of organizations have similarly adopted, in varying degrees, a process vocabulary and have further refined processual understanding of organizational life. 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 a sensibility – a disposition towards the world -– it can be developed in several different directions. For example, traditional topics such as organizational design, routines, leadership, trust, coordination, change, innovation, learning and knowledge, accountability, communication, authority, materiality and technology, etc., which have often been studied as "substances", from a process perspective can be approached as *performative accomplishments* – as situated sequences of activities and complexes of processes unfolding in time. A process view treats organizational phenomena not as *faits accomplis,* but as created and recreated through interacting embodied agents embedded in socio-material practices, mediated by institutional, linguistic and material artifacts.

Papers exploring any organizational research topic with a process orientation are invited for submission to the General Track.

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

For **2022** the theme is:

Organizing on the Precipice: Process Studies in Extreme Contexts

Rarely ever in our lifetime has the world felt as fragile, unpredictable, and its populace as anxious and volatile, as today. Extreme weather events wreak havoc on food security, wildlife and livelihoods, while an ongoing pandemic, wars, migration, demagoguery, religious and political extremism, and systemic inequalities threaten, seriously disrupt or polarize life as we know it. The unfolding situation in Afghanistan is a powerful reminder of just how rapidly the world can change, with repercussions far beyond Afghanistan's borders.

Organizational life is not impervious to extremes. In fact, particularly insightful studies of organization have involved those whose daily routines revolve around risk, and of others facing emergencies or significant disruption (see recent reviews by Bundy, Pfarrer, Short & Coombs, 2017; Williams, Gruber, Sutcliffe, Shepherd & Xiao, 2017; Hallgren, Rouleau & de Rond, 2018; Maynard, Kennedy & Resick, 2018). To mind come studies of aircraft carriers (Weick & Roberts, 1993), fast response organizations (Faraj & Xiao, 2006; van Hulst and Tsoukas, 2021), doctors and nurses at war (de Rond & Lok, 2016), climate change (McKnight & Linnenleucke, 2019), refugee camps (de la Chaux, Haugh & Greenwood, 2018), police SWAT teams (e.g., Bechky & Okhuysen, 2011), mining (e.g., Allsop & Wray, 2012), the Bhopal chemical leak (Shrivastava, Day & Love, 1987), the Mann Gulch fire (Weick, 1993; Whiteman & Cooper, 2011), the 1996 Mount Everest expedition (Elmes & Frame, 2008), the Colombia and Challenger shuttle (Starbuck & Farjoun, 2005), gang rape in the Amazon (Whiteman & Cooper, 2016), and the partial nuclear meltdown on Three Mile Island (Perrow, 2011). In many of these studies, organizations can be seen to grapple with questions of maintaining production/response

capacity and/or access to resources and consumer markets in the aftermath of, or in response to, major crises.

So, what can today's organizations learn from those that, often unexpectedly, found themselves in extreme contexts? What can they learn from those whose daily reality revolves around mitigating risk in fighting fires, mining for minerals, disposing of radio-active waste, or containing a life-threatening virus? As organization scholars, how much do we really know about the processes implicated in organizational, or organized, responses to extreme contexts, including temporal, institutional, and geographic complexities? How do structural designs, processes, and cultures impact on the ability of organizations to cope with fragility? (Taleb, 2012).

These questions are far from trivial. Although extreme contexts are rare by definition, studying them could help us better understand processes in ordinary organizations and ordinary contexts that are so subtle or taken for granted that they are easily missed. Moreover, extreme contexts may showcase the potential, as well as limitations, of human and organizational behaviours when not impeded by extensive administration, power plays, and politicking. They can provide unusually rich insights into organizational processes of adaptation, self-management, and prioritization. And they may advance our understanding of processes involved in organizational resilience, anti-fragility, and perhaps even apathy.

For PROS 2022, we invite papers that grapple with the following questions:

1. What can extreme contexts teach us about organisational processes behind resilience, anti-fragility, and adaptation, on the one hand, and apathy and intransience on the other? It is widely assumed that extreme contexts allow us to uncover what organizational agents routinely do in ordinary situations. But what evidence do we have for this being the case?
2. Where similar organizations respond differently to exposure to the same extreme event, what helps account for these differences? What underlying processes allow some organizations (and the individuals who populate them) to be more effective at sensemaking in extreme contexts?
3. How is coordination achieved in extreme contexts? What role do technologies (e.g. mobile platforms) play in achieving coordination? How do interfaces and technologies harness cognition distributed across networks? How is coordination made possible in the absence of formal governance (or a polycentric type of "governance")? Who take(s) the lead when, and why they?
4. By what processes are internet-based forms of communication allow us to "regress" into extreme (and, at face-value, primitive) forms of social organization, including public shaming? With what consequence(s)?
5. How, and to what extent, does trauma (as a consequence of extreme contexts) impact on organizational life? How do organizational members cope with trauma?
6. How can a fine-grained analysis of the dynamics between central and peripheral routines, as well as the overlap between existing and novel routines, help us better understand how a sequence of small interruptions (particularly those across space and time) can lead to crises?
7. Are there more, and less, effective means of coordinating a response to extreme contexts, and if so, by means of what processes?

8. What can extreme contexts teach us about new forms of organizing at the systemic scale? What forms of politics within and outside organizations facilitate or impede organizational responses to extreme events?
9. How do organizations learn from extreme contexts? What processes are involved in the embedding, and re-activating, of such knowledge? To what extent do responses to extremes rely on tacit knowledge?
10. Occasionally, extreme contexts are characterized by long periods of fear, fatigue, and boredom. What might a process perspective on these emotional states look like? How about a process perspective on courage?
11. Negative emotions such as stress, sorrow and frustration are a recurring feature in research into the emotions associated with extreme contexts. What about the prevalence and role of positive emotions?
12. What can process research into extreme contexts tell us about embodiment? How is the body implicated in responding to extremes? What about the effects of time, materiality and spatiality?
13. How can organizations build adaptive capacity at the systemic level to deal with the grand challenges inherent in the planetary emergency identified by natural science?

This list of questions is not exhaustive. It is offered to stimulate reflection, not to narrow debate, and we invite innovative, thoughtful, scholarly contributions from a diversity of perspectives to help advance our understanding of organizational processes in extreme contexts.

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Paper Development Labs (Monday, 20 June 2022)

Aim
The Paper Development Labs (PDL) will consist of (a) "in progress" papers and (b) panel discussions. PDLs are designed to enable participants to: (i) refine their understanding of process thinking; (ii) share some of the methodological and theoretical challenges they have encountered in conducting, theorizing, and teaching process research, or putting process insights to practice in organizations; and (iii) elicit/offer suggestions about how researching, theorizing, and teaching process may be advanced.

PDL Papers
The aim of those sessions is to provide a stimulating, interactive context for researchers to develop their ideas and writing projects.

We invite submissions of extended abstracts from researchers who have papers at a relatively early stage of empirical research and/or theory development, on which they would like helpful feedback as to how their papers may be further developed and published. These papers will be presented and extensively discussed in a roundtable format. Leading scholars will chair the roundtables and will join other participants in providing feedback on papers.

For PDL papers, we ask that presenters articulate their responses to three questions as part of their submission: (a) What is my research question and why is it important? (b) What scholarly conversation will I contribute to, and how? (c) What do I mostly need feedback on? Draft papers need to be sufficiently thought-through so that participants can grasp and be able to respond to a coherent line of thinking. Papers that will already be under review at the time of the Symposium are *not* eligible.

PDL Panel Discussions
Will also include one or more panel discussions. Their aim is to provide a forum for scholarly discussion about process-related issues, especially those connected to the 2022 conference theme.

We invite submission proposals for panel discussions related to any process-related topic. An ideal submission will aim to: discuss a topic of broad relevance to process research and the challenges it presents; consolidate, update and further advance our knowledge of it; or introduce new topics that process-oriented researchers need to know about.

Panel discussions can focus either on theoretical or methodological topics. Up to two panel discussions will be accepted. Topics related to the conference theme are particularly welcome. Proposals will be evaluated in terms of clarity, novelty, relevance for and attractiveness to the process studies community; and developmental possibilities for its participants. A PDL Panel Discussion will last for 90 minutes.

Submissions
General process-oriented papers, theme-focused papers, as well as PDL papers and panel discussion proposals are invited. Each author may make up to 2 submissions. Interested participants must submit an extended abstract of about 1000 words for their proposed contribution by **January 31, 2022** through our main website:

<p align="center">www.process-symposium.com</p>

The submission file should contain authors' names, institutional affiliations, email and postal addresses, and indicate the Track for which the submission is made (General or Thematic) or whether the submission is intended for the PDL. Authors will be notified of acceptance or otherwise by **February 28, 2022**. Full papers must be submitted by **June 6th, 2022**.