Call for Papers

Twelfth International Symposium on Process Organization Studies

Theme:
Organizing beyond organizations for the common good:
Addressing societal issues through process studies

General process-oriented and theme-focused papers are invited

24-27 June 2020

Conveners:
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Keynote Speakers:
Cynthia Hardy, Laureate Professor of Management, University of Melbourne, Australia and Honorary Professor, Cardiff Business School, UK, Fellow of the British Academy
Jennifer Howard-Grenville, Diageo Professor in Organisation Studies, University of Cambridge Judge Business School, UK, author of *Corporate Culture and Environmental Practice: Making Change at a High-technology Manufacturer*
Catherine Keller, Professor of Constructive Theology, Drew University, USA, author of *Political Theology of the Earth* and *On the Mystery: Discerning Divinity in Process*

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 sophisticated 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.

Around 120 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.

The **Twelfth Symposium** will take place on **24-27 June 2020**, 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 (**24 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.

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 **2020** the theme is:

Organizing beyond organizations for the common good: Addressing societal issues through process studies

Understanding the societal consequences of organizations is a perennial—if sometimes neglected—concern within the field of organization studies (e.g., George, 2014; Hinings & Greenwood, 2002; Margolis & Walsh, 2003; Stern & Barley, 1996). Recently, such concerns have been given renewed emphasis. For instance, a vibrant stream of research has emerged under the banner of "grand challenges" (e.g., Colquitt & George, 2011; Eisenhardt, Graebner, & Sonenshein, 2016; Ferraro, Etzion, & Gehman, 2015). According to proponents of this approach, "the fundamental principles underlying a grand challenge are the pursuit of bold ideas and the adoption of less conventional approaches to tackling large, unresolved problems" (Colquitt & George, 2011: 432). Taking this rallying cry to heart, there has been a proliferation of grand challenges-themed special issues, conference symposia, and regular journal submissions (e.g., Dorado, Etzion, & Ventresca, 2018; George, Howard-Grenville, Joshi, & Tihanyi, 2016; Voegtlin, Scherer, Stahl, Hawn, & Siegel, 2019). While many grand challenges are of interest to organization studies, such as digitisation (Dodgson, Gann, Wladawsky-Berger, Sultan, & George, 2015) and technological development and diffusion (Grodal & O'Mahony, 2017; Ozcan & Santos,

2015), there is particular emphasis on those with a strong societal component, directed at a common good beyond that of the organization.

This latter issue has inspired a resurgence of interest in the societal consequences of organizations, particularly centred on sustainability and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs as they are commonly known (e.g., Garud & Gehman, 2012; Howard-Grenville, Davis, et al., 2017). Much of this work takes the Brundtland Commission's (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987) landmark definition—meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs—as its point of departure. The SDGs have elaborated this ambition into a set of 17 goals aimed at ending poverty, protecting the planet, and ensuring prosperity for all (Howard-Grenville, Davis, et al., 2017).

While they have differences, these two formulations also have clear overlaps in terms of their empirical focus on environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues. For instance, grand challenges and sustainable development encompass a number of environmentally-oriented issues such as climate change (Ansari, Wijen, & Gray, 2013; Lefsrud & Meyer, 2012; Whiteman, Walker, & Perego, 2013), the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources, desertification and deforestation, and the provision of clean water and sanitation. These concerns go hand-in-hand with a focus on the physical and financial resilience of the natural and built environment (Jarzabkowski, Bednarek, Chalkias, & Cacciatori, 2019). At the same time, there is a growing focus on socially-oriented issues such as poverty alleviation (e.g., Banerjee & Jackson, 2017; Battilana & Dorado, 2010), gender equality, and the empowerment of women and girls (Mair, Wolf, & Seelos, 2016; Parikh, Fu, Parikh, McRobie, & George, 2015; Zhao & Wry, 2016). Such issues also address the nature of labour and employment within the gig economy (Hyman, 2018), and a so-called precariat (Standing, 2011), amid concerns that people should be engaged in productive and decent work that addresses their needs for fulfilment and security (Petriglieri, Ashford, & Wrzesniewski, 2018).

The aim of this symposium is to build on these vibrant research streams, whilst also paying more explicit and nuanced attention to two issues captured by this year's theme. First, we call for research that takes seriously the problem of "organizing beyond organizations." Second, we call for research "addressing societal issues" by engaging the unique methodological and theoretical toolkits afforded by a process studies perspective. Below we unpack each of these in turn.

First, in "organizing beyond organizations" we are not downplaying the importance of organizations. Rather, this phrase takes as given that we live in a world of organizations. Yet such system-wide, societal challenges are necessarily inter-organizational, extending beyond the boundaries of a single organization or community and its organizing efforts. Hence, a coordinated and collective response to large-scale societal issues is problematic. The numerous, diverse actors involved have multiple, often competing or disconnected interests that, nonetheless, cannot be considered in isolation. Rather, they are interdependent with the wider contemporaneous actions of other actors and over time (Jarzabkowski & Bednarek, 2018; Leiblein, Reuer, & Zenger, 2018), in ways that are

consequential for those initiatives aimed at addressing specific societal issues (e.g., Banerjee & Jackson, 2017; Ozcan & Santos, 2015). In particular, many such issues lack any central coordinated form of action, or organizing body with authority to act, so that their organizing efforts may be spontaneous, emergent, and local (Ferraro et al., 2015; Jarzabkowski et al., 2019). We therefore need theoretical approaches that both examine organizational action, but also put such action in terms of its wider relational dynamics with other distributed actors (e.g., Garud, Gehman, Kumaraswamy, & Tuertscher, 2017; Jarzabkowski, Bednarek, & Spee, 2015; Schatzki, 2002). Although some of these considerations are not new, their implications for addressing societal issues such as grand challenges and SDGs has scarcely been considered, let alone how traditional and non-traditional modes of organizing might jointly work towards achieving such outcomes.

Second, as such large, societal issues are inherently dynamic, evolving within the interdependent but often loosely connected actions of distributed actors (Ferraro et al., 2015; Jarzabkowski et al., 2019; Nicolini, 2017), we call for process theorizing to rise to the challenges of addressing such issues. Specifically, we call for papers that embrace the power of a process worldview in order to understand the unfolding nature of any particular grand challenge or societal issue, as it evolves within the relationality of actions and practices within and between organizational actors (Cooper, 2005; Emirbayer, 1997; Jarzabkowski et al., 2015; Schatzki, 2002). Such considerations might adopt a range of underlying process theoretical approaches, as per our introduction to the workshop, for example taking a performative epistemology on how our definitions of, and theoretical approaches to, grand challenges, or specific types of SDGs shape how they are addressed, and who or what are included in their responses (Austin, 1962; Callon, 1998; Garud, Gehman, & Tharchen, 2018). We are not committed to any particular process theoretical approach, but rather to how a focus on activity, flux, and movement, can shed new insights onto the unfolding dynamics of societal issues, and their consequences

Without being exclusive, we believe process studies of organizing beyond organizations in addressing societal issues holds potential to make important contributions in areas such as:

Strategy and performance assessment. A process perspective on grand challenges and SDGs raises interesting questions for strategy and performance assessment. The typical strategy toolbox assumes bounded organizations, exchange relations, hierarchal control, competitive markets, and so forth. But the domain of grand challenges and SDGs typically upends all of these assumptions and probably others. In that case, what does it mean to "do" strategy in such a context? How do firms, NGOs, governments and others successfully navigate these issues? Similarly, how should we think about performance assessment? For instance, how do we know today if we are on track for a target that is 10, 20 or more years out (Garud & Gehman, 2012; Slawinski & Bansal, 2015)? How do we keep score when the destination may change even as the journey is unfolding? How do we trace contributions across networks of organizational actors? Finally, how do we even know what metrics matter, and which impacts count (Wry & Haugh, 2018)?

People, careers, and labour relations. Increasingly technological platforms that enable service provision to be disaggregated from employment contracts are changing labour

conditions; this includes the so-called gig economy associated with organizations and technological platforms such as Uber and TaskRabbit (Hyman, 2018; Standing, 2011). We welcome process studies on the profound changes in job security, workplace affiliation, and the emotional attachment to and identity with a workplace (Petriglieri et al., 2018) that such changes generate, as well as research on how occupations and professions might foster or inhibit responses to collective problems (Howard-Grenville, Nelson, Earle, Haack, & Young, 2017; Lefsrud & Meyer, 2012).

Institutional arrangements. These human and organizational efforts take place within an inter-institutional mesh, an interplay of more or less (in)compatible understandings of practices, values and norms, regulatory prescriptions, and cultural meanings (e.g., Friedland & Alford, 1991; Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012)(e.g., Friedland & Alford, 1991; Scott, 2013; Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012). Institutions are thus at the root of responses to grand challenges and sustainability considerations (Gehman, Lounsbury, & Greenwood, 2016). Such issues raise important questions about both institutional persistence and emergence, especially when inertia may be an impediment to new, more sustainable practices (e.g., Shove & Walker, 2010). But at the same time, current events (e.g., Brexit, President Trump), raise questions about just how resilient some taken-for-granted democratic institutions may be. Better understanding the role of (social) entrepreneurial efforts in renovating or reinforcing prevailing institutions seems critical (Dacin, Dacin, & Tracey, 2011; Dorado & Ventresca, 2013). Here we see potential for process research that delves deeply into such considerations, with an eye to contributing to institutional theory approaches to addressing grand challenges and SDGs (e.g., Jennings & Hoffman, 2017).

Interdependencies and unintended consequences. Large-scale societal issues are inherently interdependent, in which seemingly well-intentioned actions directed at societal transformation give rise to unintended consequences. Such consequences may be negative, as when efforts to better specify areas at high risk of loss from extreme weather events leads to financial exclusion of some actors (Jarzabkowski et al., 2019). Similarly Artificial Intelligence systems while streamlining processes of human judgement may also exacerbate inbuilt biases so excluding some sectors of society from employment, or credit (Kleinberg, Lakkaraju, Leskovec, Ludwig, & Mullainathan, 2018; Reuters, 2018). Yet unintended consequences are not always negative. Rather, they may involve changing cultural practices, such as those which see people, long admonished not to get into cars with strangers, or to allow strangers into their homes, doing precisely that. The rise of the sharing economy shifts our trust to algorithms and technological screening to provide us with safety in Uber or other ride-sharing businesses, or safe stays in a stranger's home, through platforms such as Airbnb (Schor & Fitzmaurice, 2015). We look for process studies that can address how interdependencies between organizations, actors, and material agencies are giving rise to profound and unintended societal transformations, not all of which are negative.

When doing good doesn't. Sometimes actions that are intended to enhance or generate a social good can have the opposite effects. For example, Banerjee & Jackson (2017) show how microfinance initiatives can actually stimulate a cycle of debt and, in addition, break

down traditional community forms of support, thereby exacerbating, rather than alleviating poverty. The use of bioethanol is another example of how seeming well-intentioned actions at a point in time can be harmful over time. In this case, diverting corn from food to fuel in an effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions had the unintended effect of driving food prices higher, thereby hampering efforts to feed the poor (e.g., Ferraro et al., 2015: 366; Ziegler, 2013). We welcome process studies that can explain how and why initiatives that are intended to do good result in negative consequences for the very societal issues they are meant to resolve.

Revisiting process theory: Finally, how will studies of societal issues contribute to process theorizing. We suggest that the study of societal issues may take process theorizing beyond its predominantly organizational and anthropocentric focus in organization studies. Existing process studies are focused on understanding organizational change and flux (e.g., Denis, Lamothe, & Langley, 2001; Jarzabkowski, 2008; Pettigrew, 1987) and to some extent their broader interorganizational implications for social issues (Jay, 2013; Maguire & Hardy, 2013) . Yet we suspect that we have hardly begun to grasp the power of process theorizing (Langley, Smallman, Tsoukas, & Van de Ven, 2013), particularly at a systemic level, that might not only help us to understand societal issues, but also to advance process theory in organization studies. In particular, while process theory has a strong focus on agency in its different forms, we might consider non-anthropocentric views (e.g., Haraway, 2016; Kohn, 2013). Earth is not just an ark for humanity, but for being. Can we put process theorizing under the microscope and rethink "beyond the human organization"? Are there ways of re-imaging data collection and analysis (harnessing extra-organizational data)?

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Paper Development Labs (Wednesday, 24 June 2020)

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 PDL paper sessions will be organized by **Mark de Rond** (University of Cambridge, UK) and **Dvora Yanow** (Wageningen University, The Netherlands). 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 that participants can grasp and be able to respond to a line of thinking. Papers that will already be under review at the time of the Symposium are not eligible.

PDL Panel Discussions
The PDL will also include one or more panel discussions, organized by PROS's convenors. Their aim is to provide a forum for scholarly discussion about process-related issues.

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 three 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 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, 2020** through the following link:

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

The submission 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 **March 7, 2020**. Full papers must be submitted by **June 4, 2020**.