

## Call for Papers

# Second International Symposium on Process Organization Studies

**Theme: Constructing Identity in and around Organizations**

**11-13 June 2010, Rhodes, Greece**

### Conveners:

**Steve Maguire**, McGill University, Canada ([steve.maguire@mcgill.ca](mailto:steve.maguire@mcgill.ca))

**Majken Schultz**, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark ([ms.ioa@cbs.dk](mailto:ms.ioa@cbs.dk))

**Ann Langley**, HEC Montreal, Canada ([ann.langley@hec.ca](mailto:ann.langley@hec.ca))

**Haridimos Tsoukas**, ALBA Graduate Business School, Greece & University of Warwick, UK ([process.symposium@gmail.com](mailto:process.symposium@gmail.com))

### Keynote Speakers:

**Michael G. Pratt**, Professor of Organization Studies, Boston College, USA, Associate Editor, *Academy of Management Journal*

**James V. Wertsch**, Marshall S. Snow Professor in Arts & Sciences, Washington University in St. Louis, USA, author of *Mind as Action* and *Voices of Collective Remembering*

**James Williams**, Professor of European Philosophy, University of Dundee, UK, author of *Gilles Deleuze's Logic of Sense: A Critical Introduction and Guide*

### Rationale: 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 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 involved in - the sequences of activities and transactions that take place 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.

A process view rests on a anti-dualist and relational ontology, namely the recognition that everything that is has no existence apart from its relation to other things, and, therefore, long established dualisms such as mind and body, reason and emotion, humanity and

nature, individual and collective, organism and environment, agency and structure, ethics and science, need to be overcome. Focusing on *inter*-actions is preferred to analyzing self-standing actions.

A process orientation is sensitive to the constructive role of embodied-cum-embedded agency in bringing about the world we come to experience as an independent structure and to the experiences generated by human and non-human agency. Unlike substances, which do not include one another but are seen as nested, standing under one another – *sub-stantia* -, experiences include other experiences and grow out of the integration of bodily and mental events into something new. Cognition and symbolic interaction are understood to be embedded into ways of life and arising from embodied interactions with the world, mediated by artifacts. Temporality is a constitutive feature of human experience, and processes unfold in time. Human phenomena cannot be properly understood if time is abstracted away.

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

The aim of this Symposium is to consolidate, integrate, and further develop ongoing efforts to advance a sophisticated process perspective in organization studies. It is important for the vigorous intellectual development of the field and its relevance to the world of practice that the implications and resonance of the process worldview for organization studies be appreciated and sustained, rather than just dallied with as an engaging side-line in the prevailing analytic language game. We live in a world of processes although we often try to comprehend it in the vocabulary of substances. Aligning our conceptual vocabulary with our organizational experience is an important aim of the Symposium.

The Symposium is an annual event organized by the new annual volume *Perspectives on Process Organization Studies* (Editors: Ann Langley and Haridimos Tsoukas), published by Oxford University Press, and it takes place in a Mediterranean island, in early summer each year. The First Symposium took place at Columbia Beach Resort, Pissouri, Cyprus (<http://www.columbia-hotels.com/english/index-zypern.html>), 11-13 June 2009. Its structure, themes and abstracts can be seen at [www.alba.edu.gr/pros](http://www.alba.edu.gr/pros). About 50 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 Second Symposium will take place at the Elysium Resort & Spa ([www.elysium.gr](http://www.elysium.gr)), in the island of Rhodes ([www.rodosislandinfo.gr](http://www.rodosislandinfo.gr), [www.holiday.gr](http://www.holiday.gr)), Greece, on **11-13 June 2010**. 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 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) 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, self-organization, 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. Perspectives drawing on post-rationalist philosophies, social constructivism, discourse and narrative theory, practice theory, actor network theory, path-dependence theory, complexity science, Austrian economics, socio-cultural, discursive and ecological psychology, activity theory, business history, ethnomethodology, and symbolic interaction are examples of a *process* orientation to the study of organizational phenomena that treats them 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 2010 the theme is **Constructing Identities in and around Organizations**.

More specifically, constructing identities – those processes of social construction through which actors in and around organizations co-construct, negotiate, stabilize, maintain, reproduce disrupt, destabilize, repair or otherwise change their sense of selves and others – has become a critically important topic in the study of organizations. Departing from early conceptualizations which posited organizational identity as those aspects of their organization that members perceive as central, enduring and distinctive (Albert and Whetten, 1985), recent research has studied identity as relational and dynamic, formed through interactions, associations and conversations; "organizational identity is not an aggregation of perceptions of an organization resting in peoples' heads, it is a dynamic set of processes by which an organization's self is continuously socially constructed from the interchange between internal and external definitions of the organization offered by all organizational stakeholders" (Hatch & Schultz, 2002: 1004). Identity is thus an ongoing accomplishment; processes of constructing identity are open to contestation and

as productive of fragmented, fluid selves characterized by multiple, contradictory narratives as of convergent, stable ones.

Further, identity construction is historically situated in time and space: “the various categorizations that constitute identity and their meanings are not fixed but change over time, in different contexts, and as a result of ongoing language use” (Maguire & Hardy, 2005: 15) such that “informed analysis of identity construction in an organizational setting has to acknowledge the socially and discursively constructed nature of the self” (Kärreman and Alvesson, 2001: 63).

In this year’s Thematic Track, we encourage empirical and/or conceptual submissions that address the relationships between constructing identities and organizing, and particularly those that push understanding of these concepts and their relations into new or underdeveloped areas. Submissions may address, but need not be confined to, topics such as: processes of constructing, negotiating, maintaining, repairing or changing identities in or around organizations; identity emergence or collapse; processes of identification and identity work; processes of managing, influencing or directing identity; the construction of identities in different organizational (e.g. NGOs v. private sector; professionalized v. non-professionalized fields; etc.), strategic (e.g. mergers and acquisitions v. spin-offs v. joint ventures or collaborations, etc.), or cultural (e.g. different national or regional cultures) contexts; identity dynamics and the temporal dimension of identity construction; the role of technology, artifacts, the body, emotions or aesthetics in identity construction; narratives and storytelling in identity construction; the relationships between identity and related concepts such as image, culture, reputation, branding, communication, etc.; the processes of practicing identity; the relationships between identity processes and other important organizational concepts such as power, institutions, networks, strategy-making, trust, etc.; different methods for studying identity processes (e.g. ethnography, discourse analysis, quantitative approaches, etc.); or different paradigmatic perspectives on identity processes (e.g. critical realism, post-structuralism, etc.).

Following a rigorous review process, a selection of papers will appear in the second volume of *Perspectives on Process Organization Studies* in 2011.

### **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>, 2010**. 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 **February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2010**. Full papers will be submitted by **May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2010**.