

Track no. 3: “Change and Continuity / Stability (C&C/S)”

22nd Nordic Academy of Management Conference: Reykjavík 2013

The state of art in the research and practice fields “Change management and Change Communication” is shaped by paradoxes. On the one hand, models, tools, and prescriptions about change and change (related) communication are legion - even when the variation of the models and tools is not very large. On the other hand, studies about how they affect the daily practices and discourses of managers, employees or civil servants are scarce. There is another paradox. “Change” has become not only an ideological buzz word, but almost a panacea for all kinds of crises. It serves as a hegemonic discourse that dominates other voices focusing on sustainability – and more concretely in the empirical data - on continuity and stability. In adherence to the action and practice turn in the social sciences, our track wants to focus on the interplay of Change & Continuity / Stability with other practices like communicating, administrating, managing, leading, opposing, challenging, evaluating, sense-making and reflecting. Therefore we call particularly for interdisciplinary studies of the shaped and shaping practices of Change & Continuity / Stability.

Models and tools for organizational change and change communication are ubiquitous in the management literature and, in particular, in the consultancy industry. Many of these models and tools are on the normative how-to-do-level and often based on anecdotal sources. However, these models and tools do have significant effects in day-to-day organizational practices and discourses, as they partake in staging, enacting, framing, and implementing given change initiatives. But what are their effects? And what concepts are of help to understand these effects? We aim at fostering a discussion not primarily about the adequacy of these models and tools, but of their ‘doings’, of their effective ‘performativity’ in day-to-day organizational practices and discourses.

At the same time we want to explore the dualities of organizational change and organizational continuity / stability. It has been acknowledged that processes of continuity / stability – like change - emerge and are constructed in the daily work and discourses of organizational members. But, they might also be pursued and eventually achieved intentionally in the negotiations of meanings and sense making/s of managers and employees. Empirical data show clearly that management prefers to frame the future in terms of change, whereas employees stress needs for stability and continuity besides change. Line or middle managers find themselves in the middle of this tension, and their actions and discourse have been shown to have profound impact on the outcome of different change initiatives, i.e. they can promote change or the status quo. It might be that the consultancy industry has set change management and change communication on their agenda, and thereby seems to forget / having silenced continuity management and stability communication. But why should (empirical) research uncritically follow this line?

We call for papers that investigate the interplay of Change and Continuity / Stability in terms of innovation, technology, administration, (self-) management, organizational discourse, and culture. Papers may be empirical, theoretical, and methods-oriented, or mixtures of these three categories. We acknowledge that the area of Change & Continuity may be approached with many different ontological and epistemological assumptions – and hope that the track will foster a rich meeting of such diverse perspectives.

The common denominator we seek in the different approaches to studies of change and continuity / stability is deep study of the processes involved, thus favoring ethnographic, participant, action or invention research approaches. We call especially for interdisciplinary research based on theoretical and methodological perspectives. Topics include Innovation research, Science and Technology Studies, ANT, organizational learning, constructivism, dialogism, CCO – the communicative constitution of organization, discourse analysis, Discourse Communities and Communities of Practice.

We are interested in case studies from all types of workplace, private as well as the public sector, and public-private partnerships. At the meta-level analyses and discussions of the intervening practices in Academia (research), the Consultancy Industry (consulting) and Business Schools (teaching / learning) can contribute to reflections on our own “practice about practice”.

Of particular interest to this track are the following themes:

- The discursive construction of change and stability/continuity
- The enactment of change and continuity/stability
- Change/ continuity and leadership
- The ‘performativity’ of models, techniques and devices of change and stability/continuity
- Change models and tools as instruments of power
- Change and fashions / fads: What affects the choice of change management approaches, methods, tools, change communication strategies?
- The travelling of ideas and concepts: Consultancy industry, business schools and journals as “change agents”?
- Change without “burning platforms” (Kotter)
- Change Related Communication (CRC)
- Line managers as change / continuity agents and communicators?
- The practice of change and intervention in the public sector
- Longitudinal (case) studies of change processes
- Dialogue in research: When academia meets (reflective) practitioners.
- Change and stability “in action”

NB. This track continues the discussion from the 2011 track “Change and Intervention”.

Organizers

Contact: Associate Professor Karl-Heinz Pagner PhD. Copenhagen Business School, Department of Intercultural Communication and Management, Porcelænshaven 18 A, DK-2000 Frederiksberg; kp.ikl@cbs.dk (uk.cbs.dk/staff/kp)

Associate Professor Catrin Johansson PhD. Mid Sweden University, ITM /MKV Sundsvall; Catrin.Johansson@miun.se (<http://www.miun.se/sv/universitetet/Organisation/institutioner/itm/Var-organisation/Organisation/Avdelningar/MKV/Personal-vid-MKV/Catrin-Johansson/Catrin-Johansson>)

Professor Laurie Lewis, Rutgers University, School of Communication lewsl@rutgers.edu (<http://comminfo.rutgers.edu/directory/lewisl/index.html#.UFg5e66WZEM>)