

Call for Papers

The 8th International Conference in Critical Management Studies
10 - 12 July 2013
University of Manchester

Sub-theme:

Reflexivity: Advances in the Study of Organizational Change

Convenors:

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Reflexivity is a common reference point in modernization theory (Luhmann, Beck, Giddens, Sandywell), developmental psychology (Piaget, Raithel, Groeben, Kohlberg), critical social theory (Bourdieu, Habermas, Jessop), the philosophy of science (e.g. Bunge, Gouldner) and organizational learning (Argyris & Schön). Some of the work is on critical self-awareness of social research, concerning premises, values, and unintended consequences of intervention, like in the area of CMS the work of Alvesson and Sköldböck or Gouldner. The latter is not our focus here. While in the theory of reflexive modernization Beck and Giddens portrait reflexivity as a more or less “digital” alternative to fundamentalist reactions (TINA-principle, the politics of “There Is No Alternative”) on contingency in the modern world, we see very different forms and levels of reflexivity in (other) social practices. For us reflexivity is an important feature of critical thinking, of critical self-reference in individual development, organizational innovation and social change.

Although we lost trust in the continuous diffusion and linear progress of enlightenment, the question remains relevant, which organizational, societal, educational settings foster reflexivity with respect to reigning rules within these settings. Neoliberal capitalism has wiped away many securities, but also the security that social practices organized along its principles are desirable and without alternative. Therefore the question arises to which extend people and organizations cope with that in the form of (new) fundamentalism or reflexivity. And how to identify, measure, evaluate levels of reflexivity in organizational cultures and subjectivity. If reflexivity is not understood as a digital construct, we have to discuss how to conceptualize epistemological qualities of knowledge, practice and culture in organizations; and how this might contribute to understanding self-reference, inertia or innovation capabilities.

As a personal epistemological style, reflexive perceiving and acting can be described by the ability to take up an observational perspective on one’s own action and conception; an awareness of perspective, of being situated inevitably; it comprises an attentiveness of unintended side effects of own action, and a high readiness to accept ambiguity and alternative interpretations of social reality (e.g. skepticism concerning “one best way”). In organizational cultures reflexivity can be identified and observed in epistemological practices like “strong” project management, forms of discourse, ways of knowledge absorption, and also in practices described as mindfulness by Karl Weick.

In an institutional perspective, reflexive practices, or better, the level of reflexivity can be interpreted as an indicator of personal and organizational innovativeness or dynamic capabilities, as addressed in modern theories of the firm. Since these theories (Dynamic Capabilities Approach, Knowledge-based View of the firm, Competence-based View of the firm etc.) deal with innovativeness and hysteresis, but have little or no critical potential and intention, the sub-stream also invites contributions which discuss the relations between CMS, critical systems thinking, capability theories of the firm, and heterodox economics.

Therefore, the sub-stream addresses three types of theoretical questions: theory-based indicators for innovativeness on the personal and the organizational level; relations and differences between critical thinking on these two levels; and relation (and contradictions) between Critical Management Studies, Socio-Economics and theories of the firm.

Although our own work is more about the role of reflexivity in processes of organizational change and innovation we are also interested in contributions and discussions of reflexivity as a competence in wider social contexts e.g. social movements, democracy and social change, macro-social phenomena.

We are interested in contributions concerning ...

- the conceptualization of reflexivity in processes of organizational and social change.
- the interplay between personal and institutional reflexivity.
- empirical and conceptual studies of the development of reflexivity as a competence.
- reflexivity as a personal competence from a life course perspective.
- the interdependence of reflexivity and responsibility on organizational (e.g. csr, sustainability), meso (team, leadership) and individual (perception, consciousness/awareness, agency) levels.

Submission of Abstracts:

Please send abstracts or any questions to Matthias Wörten and Tobias Hallensleben:

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Abstracts should be a maximum of 1000 words, A4 paper, single spaced, 12 point font. The deadline for submission of abstracts is **24th February 2013**.

Notification of paper acceptance: 15th March 2013.

Full papers will be expected by **26th May 2013**.

Your abstract should include:

- Title
- The focus, aims and objectives of the paper
- The research evidence base underpinning the paper
- How the paper will contribute to the theme

Authors of selected papers from the conference will be invited to submit revised manuscripts for a special issue of "*International Journal of Work Innovation*", subject to the normal review processes of the journal.