Title: Time and Temporality in Process Research

Main sponsor: Research Methods division
Potential co-sponsors:
Strategizing activity and practice interest group
Business policy and strategy
Organization and management theory
Organizational Communication & Information Systems
Organizational development and change
Organizational behaviour
Critical Management Studies
Management history

Abstract:
This ninth annual PDW explores the issue of time in process research. The workshop, which supports a growing community of scholars across Academy divisions who want to share and learn about methods for conducting process studies, increases in attendance and positive evaluations each year. This year’s PDW will focus on how researchers may engage or re-engage with one of the distinguishing characteristics of process research: time. While time is always an innate characteristic of processes, the specific approach to, and nature of, temporality is often hidden in process research. The aim of this PDW is to foreground time and temporality in process methods by building upon the work of three established scholars who have each taken novel approaches to emphasizing the importance of time in organizational or management processes in their work.

We propose to organize the 2013 workshop in two consecutive two-hour parts. The first part focuses on time and temporality in process research, and the importance of novel analysis in dealing with change over extended periods of time. It will feature presentations by JoAnn Yates (MIT Sloan School of Management), Sarah Kaplan (University of Toronto, Rotman School) and Connie Gersick (Yale University School of Management), followed by a panel of the presenters and the workshop convenors, in interactive discussion with the audience. The aim of this session is to bring the practice of process research to life through the experiences of established process scholars.

The second part of the PDW provides participants with opportunities to present and receive feedback on their own process studies in small group discussions with past and present Process Research PDW faculty and other participants on short papers that they submit about their process research projects. The workshop concludes with a discussion on approaches for building a community of process research scholars.

Workshop Overview:
This workshop is addressed to researchers interested in studying how dynamic processes unfold over time, as individuals, groups, organizations and environments act and interact. This year’s workshop will focus particularly on the challenges of dealing with time and temporality in process research. While all processes are innately concerned with time, the specific nature of and approach to temporality is often part of the background to such studies. Yet time is not simply
Calendric, following regular increments of minutes, hours, months and years in an even flow. Other treatments of time are equally or potentially more valid in deriving robust process findings that acknowledge the varying rhythms that time may take in individual and organizational life. For example, time may also be conceptualised through the peak events that assume significance or meaning within processes, such as the deadlines that shape perceptions of urgency and speed within processes (Gersick, 1989; Perlow, Okhuysen & Repenning, 2002). Similarly, actors’ engagement in management and organization processes is guided by their temporal orientations towards past, present and future (Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013; Orlikowski & Yates, 2002), requiring scholars to develop a multi-dimensional approach to time. Indeed, time is also a biographical notion, spanning individuals’ life histories, and hence, variation in their involvement in management and organization processes according to their personal trajectories. Our workshop aims to examine some of these potential treatments of time, bringing them to the foreground as methods for probing the temporal nature of processes.

This topic will be relevant to process scholars working across the domains of AoM Divisions. Process research is not focused upon a specific topic area, industry or level of analysis, but rather on the dynamic phenomena of process; that is, how and why things emerge, develop, grow, or terminate over time. In particular, process research brings its own particular publication challenges because of the need to make sense of temporal data and find effective ways to display complex temporal relationships within the constraints of conventional academic reporting. Hence, this year’s theme is intended to provide value for those adopting a process research paradigm, not only through the topic specific nature of the presentations, but also through the guidance that these experienced presenters offer about publishing from such work. Our aim in this PDW is to advance scholarship by supporting participants in developing robust process research designs, generating insightful analyses, and publishing their findings in leading journals.

Design of the workshop and participating faculty
The workshop has two parts. Prospective participants should register separately in each part. Part 1 is open to all. Part 2 requires participants to submit a 1000-2000 abstract of a process research paper or project.

Part 1: Open to all
Speaking on enacted time in research on the past and present, JoAnne Yates (MIT) will outline the notion of enacted time that she and Wanda Orlikowski presented in their 2002 Organization Science article, “It’s About Time: Temporal Structuring in Organizations,” and then explore its use in her contemporary and historical studies of organizations. She will start with the notion that we enact multiple different temporal structures in our everyday and work life through our practices. Since we enact them, we can also change them, either explicitly or implicitly. By focusing on temporal structures enacted in practice, we blur dichotomies such as objective vs. subjective time and cyclic vs. linear time. She will use examples from her previous studies of contemporary electronic communication, including the Common LISP project and a study of a tiny start-up, Little Company, to demonstrate how temporal structures can illuminate processes. She will then talk about enacted time in her historical work, focusing particularly on her current work (with co-author Craig N. Murphy) on the processes and organizations of voluntary consensus standards setting (VCSS) over the past 100+ years. The temporal structures enacted by VCSS organizations such as the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the
American National Standards Institute (ANSI) were created a century ago and have been reified in the organizations as part of the VCSS process and have many advantages, including extensiveness of technical investigation and inclusiveness of deliberations. By examining how these structures interact with the increasing pace of technological innovation in key industries such as telecommunications and computing, however, we can understand recent complaints about and even defections from these organizations and their processes. Newer standardizing organizations—including the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), and three European standardizing organizations—all have as one of several goals to speed up the standardizing process. She will address such issues as how (or whether) they can enact such a speeding up while retaining other advantages.

Sarah Kaplan (University of Toronto) will present her forthcoming *Organization Science* paper (co-authored with Wanda Orlikowski) on “Temporal Work in Strategy Making”. That work reported on a field study of strategy making in one organization facing an industry crisis. In a comparison of five strategy projects, it was observed that organizational participants struggled with competing interpretations of what might emerge in the future, what was currently at stake, and even what had happened in the past. From this base, Kaplan and Orlikowski developed a model of temporal work in strategy making that articulates how actors resolved differences and linked their interpretations of the past, present, and future so as to construct a strategic account that enabled concrete strategic choice and action. They found that settling on a particular account required it to be coherent, plausible and acceptable, otherwise breakdowns resulted. Such breakdowns could impede progress, but could also be generative in provoking a search for new interpretations and possibilities for action. The more intensely actors engaged in temporal work, the more likely the strategies departed from the status quo. The model suggests that strategy cannot be understood as the product of more or less accurate forecasting without considering the multiple interpretations of present concerns and historical trajectories that help to constitute those forecasts. Projections of the future are always entangled with views of the past and present, and temporal work is the means by which actors construct and reconstruct the connections among them. These insights into the mechanisms of strategy making explain the practices and conditions that produce organizational inertia and change.

Connie Gersick (Yale University) will discuss the importance of developing novel approaches to the analysis of new questions—common in process studies. She contends that in countless papers, job talks and colloquia, scholars take care to legitimate their methods as sanctioned by past precedent. But tried and true methods are not always right for new questions; they can mislead as well as guide us. Sometimes we need to overcome venerable approaches and create new tools to answer our questions. This may be particularly true when we are doing exploratory, qualitative research—not testing hypotheses about how inputs link to outputs. The overarching goal of her talk will be to encourage inventiveness in analyzing process data. She will illustrate this by sharing some of her own trial-and-error discovery of analytical tools, using concrete examples from research in progress. She will draw from her study of women's adult development, based on biographical interviews with forty participants aged 45 to 55. This project was especially challenging because of the incredible diversity of women's life paths, enacted against a backdrop of profound (and ongoing) change in the opportunities and obstacles surrounding them. The presentation will focus on Connie’s journey as a researcher trying to understand complex data rather than on presenting the research findings per se. She will
concentrate on two hard challenges posed by the data: finding patterns in the women's decades-long career paths, and understanding how they managed the trade-offs between work and personal life over time. Hopefully, her examples will also offer the workshop participants some new ideas for working with qualitative process data.

In the final segment of the first part, the paper presenters and the workshop convenors will take part in an interactive panel discussion with the audience about the presentations. The aim is for the panelists to share their insights on developing process research with the audience and address any specific questions.

**Part 2: Open to registrants who submit short papers for discussion**

In the second part of the workshop, participants will discuss and receive feedback from faculty and other participants on short papers of 1000-2000 words they submit describing their process research projects. Clive Smallman will coordinate this session.

Faculty members Julia Balogun, Connie Gersick, Paula Jarzabkowski), Sarah Kaplan, Patricia Klarner, Melissa Mazmanian, Sebastian Raisch, Clive Smallman, Michael Smets, Andy Van de Ven and JoAnne Yates will facilitate round tables for this session. This internationally diverse set of faculty comprises experienced process researchers who are well known in this field. By experience, we expect 45-55 submissions for this activity, and will organize round tables with 3-4 papers each. A panel discussion among faculty and participants will complete Part 2.

**Program**

**Part 1**

0-5 min  
*Welcome and overview of workshop*  
Chair: Paula Jarzabkowski, (Cornell U.) or Clive Smallman (U. Western Sydney)

5-35 min  
Presentation: *Temporal Structuring in Organizations*  
JoAnne Yates (MIT Sloan School of Management)

35-65 min  
Presentation: *Temporal Work in Strategy Making*  
Sarah Kaplan (University of Toronto, Rotman School)

65-95 min  
Presentation: Novel Approaches to the Analysis of Temporal Data  
Connie Gersick (Yale University School of Management)

95-115 min  
Panel: JoAnne Yates, Sarah Kaplan, Connie Gersick, Chair

115-120 min  
Wrap-up: Chair

**Part 2**

135-220 min  
*Small group discussions of participants’ process research papers* (85 min)  
Organized by Clive Smallman, University of Western Sydney

**Group discussion leaders:**

Julia Balogun, Lancaster U., UK

Connie Gersick, Yale U., USA

Paula Jarzabkowski, Cornell U., USA

Sarah Kaplan, Toronto U., Canada

Patricia Klarner, U. of Munich Germany

Melissa Mazmanian, UC Irvine, USA
Sebastian Raisch, HEC U. of Geneva, Switzerland
Clive Smallman, U. of Western Sydney, Australia
Michael Smets, Aston U., UK
Andy Van De Ven, U. of Minnesota, USA
JoAnne Yates, MIT, USA

220-240 min  Concluding panel (20 min)
Discussion of questions & issues and suggestions for building the process research community

Preparation and registration
Pre-registration is required separately for Parts 1 and 2 of the workshop. Participants should go to our web site www.processresearchmethods.org for further details. Participants for Part 2 must submit by 8 July 2013 a short (1000-2000 word) paper describing a process research project. Instructions and a form for submitting the papers are on the web site, and questions should be directed to Andy Van de Ven and his assistant who manages this web site. Clive Smallman will coordinate the small group discussion paper session. He will group the participants’ papers by topic/methods areas, and send them for advance reading to all participants and faculty in each small group paper session.

Sponsorship of workshop
As in the past, we are asking the Research Methods division to sponsor this workshop because it falls within its central research methods purview. This ninth annual process research methods PDW has become a regular theme of the AoM Research Methods PDW program, with 160 people typically attending the Part 1 in previous years, and some 40-50 papers discussed in small groups during part 2 of the PDW. Each year the PDW supports a community of new and experienced scholars who want to share and become acquainted with methods for conducting process studies.

Logistics details
Venue: I am asking for a 160 person room size organized in round tables to permit discussion. Last year’s workshop was attended by 160 participants for the first part.
Food: We would appreciate coffee and cookies.
Schedule: This will be a 4 hour workshop in two parts with a 15 minute break between the parts.

Agreements to participate
I have received signed email statements from all intended participants agreeing to participate for the entire workshop, AND that these participants are not in violation of the Rule of 3 + 3.

References