

Taking a Strong Process Approach to Analyzing Qualitative Process Data

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Main challenge: how to present rich qualitative research without falling into dualistic assumptions?

'Typical' data

- Everyday practices and actions

Challenge: where do I find *appropriate* sites & how do I get access?

- Informed by interest and theoretical lens
- Largely observation-based longitudinal data
- Partially observed in real-time

Analytical strategies

Types of process: empirically observed patterns of action

- Scripted pattern
- Emerging pattern: in search of a pattern
- Pattern in the moment

Based on: Jarzabkowski, P., Lê, J. & Spee, P. “, in A. Langley & H. Tsoukas, *Sage Handbook of Process Organization Studies*, SAGE.

Scripted pattern

- Characteristic: a series of distinct tasks and activities that make the process identifiable and recognizable to the participants charged with performing the process; clear beginning and end of episodes
- Challenge: how to step inside a taken-for-granted process; establishing the script
- Potential phenomena: strategic planning processes; strategic planning workshops

Based on Spee & Jarzabkowski 2011 'Strategic planning as communication process' Organization Studies

Emerging pattern

- Characteristic: the actors themselves are trying to delineate and construct a direction or order within their activities; multiple patterns are rarely alike
- Challenge: uncovering 'the pattern' which may only be recognized in retrospect
- Possible phenomena: major organizational restructuring, executing change initiatives

Based on Jarzabkowski, Lê & Feldman 2012. 'Toward a theory of coordinating: Creating coordinating mechanisms in practice' *Organization Science*

Pattern in the moment

- Characteristic: everyday activities without written rules or 'scripts'
- Challenge: requires to drill down into micro-instances of process
- Possible phenomena: vast opportunity to explore specific instances of 'practice'

Based on Smets, Jarzabkowski, Burke & Spee 2015. 'Reinsurance Trading in Lloyd's of London: Balancing conflicting-yet-complementary logics in practice'. *Academy of Management Journal*

Demands on the researcher

- A deep understanding of the observed
- Narrow the analytical focus by zooming in on certain focal activities
- Choose relevant theoretical frames
- Treating the interpretive work as *craft*

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analyzing process data is as much a process of becoming as the activities we observed

Thank you