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SIG KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Track 28:

Organizational Ambidexterity: Extending Theory with Qualitative Approaches

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Abstract:

The question how organizations cope with the challenge of managing the interplay between stability and change in order to perform successfully within dynamic environments is a central research topic in contemporary organization science and management practice. The contradiction between the antagonistic learning modes of exploration and exploitation (March, 1991) is highlighted in the research on ambidexterity, which has emerged as the central research stream in trying to answer this question (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996; Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004; Benner & Tushman, 2003).

Hitherto, scholars applied various research methods and examined diverse units of analysis (organizations, business units, innovation processes, learning processes, individuals, groups, top-management teams, inter-organizational networks) to provide insights into the phenomenon of ambidexterity. However, existing reviews (Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008; Simsek et al., 2009) still criticize the lack of consistent and transparent theory and propose various avenues for further research. One important element of the research agenda on ambidexterity concerns the call for

more qualitative research, which is needed to foster our understanding of the underlying processes, which support the generation and maintenance of ambidexterity.

We aim to embrace qualitative approaches to the phenomenon of organizational ambidexterity, which add to theory development in this promising field of inquiry. Topics can include, but are not limited to:

- The role of TMTs in structurally and in contextually ambidextrous organizations. Which similarities or differences can be found here?
- Which mechanisms enable the effective transfer of knowledge within structurally and contextually ambidextrous organizations (Jansen, Tempelaar, Van Den Bosch, & Volberda, 2009)?
- How does ambidexterity effect an organization's adaptation to a dynamic environment, i.e. which processes make ambidexterity become a dynamic capability (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008)?
- How do various antecedents of ambidexterity interact? How is the interplay between structural, contextual antecedents and leadership shaped?
- Do time structures facilitate ambidexterity in the sense that prospective and retrospective patterns of action relate to exploitation whereas proactivity or reactivity induce more innovative behaviors (Orlikowski & Yates, 2002)?
- How do HR practices contribute the organizational ambidexterity (Kang & Snell, 2009; Swart & Kinnie, 2010)?

Keywords: Ambidexterity, Exploration/Exploitation, Organizational Learning/Change