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SIG KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Track 29:

Absorptive Capacity: Organizational Learning Concepts beyond established Debates

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Abstract:

The ability of firms to sense their environment, to recognize new opportunities and to capture new information is important for gaining and sustaining competitive advantage. Research on absorptive capacity addresses this topic by investigating the process by which firms recognize valuable information, assimilate it, and apply it to commercial ends. However, nearly 20 years after Cohen and Levinthal's (1990) pioneering work and several conceptual (e.g. Zahra and George 2002, Todorova and Durisin 2007) and empirical contributions (e.g. Jansen et al. 2005), Easterby-Smith et al. (2008) conclude that the progress in this field is still insufficient to help us to understand how the strategic imperative of organizational learning can be operationalized in practice. The absorption of *new knowledge from outside and the embeddedness* into the firm's existing knowledge base is complex and happens continuously and simultaneously on various levels within a firm (Okhuysen and Eisenhardt 2002, Antonacopoulou et al. 2008).

In this track, we seek to develop further the strategic orientation of organizational learning research and to bridge gaps, especially in relation to absorptive capacity, knowledge integration,

networks and innovation management. In order to advance a holistic process perspective (Easterby-Smith et al. 2008, Filippini et al. 2008, Chiva et al. 2010) we are open to all methods of research by inviting papers that comprehensively explore absorptive capacity beyond established debates. Some of the questions we hope to discuss include but are not restricted to the following:

- How do firms deliberately or unconsciously recognize and process new information and knowledge?
- How and in which ways do organizations embed new information and knowledge into the existing firm's knowledge base?
- How can we capture the complex interplay between different organizational network levels in recognizing, assimilating and applying new knowledge?
- Should we revise the classical proxies of absorptive capacities to go beyond the assimilation to R&D?
- What is the relationship between absorptive capacity and disruptive innovation?

Keywords:

Knowledge integration, Networks, Innovation management