

Current Interest in the Theory of Path Dependence – A Short Update*

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There is an increased interest in the field of *technology and innovation management* in studies that are informed by path concepts (e.g. Ansari and Garud, 2009; Valorinta, Schildt, and Lamberg, 2011; Dobusch and Schüßler, 2013; Kay, 2013; Bergek and Onufrey, 2014; Greve and Seidel, 2015; Singh, Mathiassen and Mishra, 2015; Berggren, Sydow and Tell, 2017; Nilson, 2017; Wessel, Gersch and Harloff, 2017). The same also holds true for the fields of *strategic management*, including research on interorganizational alliances/networks (e.g. Koch, 2011; Müller-Seitz and Sydow 2011; Sydow, Windeler, Schubert, and Sydow, 2012; Burger and Sydow, 2014; Rothmann and Koch, 2014; Schmidt and Braun, 2015; Sydow, 2015; Wenzel, 2015; Ding, Kininmonth, and McKinstry, 2016; Laudien and Daxböck, 2016; Wenzel et al. 2017), as well as for *organizational research* (e.g. Sydow, Schreyögg, and Koch 2009; Schreyögg, Sydow and Holtmann, 2011; Kremser and Schreyögg, 2016; Bothello and Salles-Djelic, 2018). Even the fields of *project management, international management and business logistics* have shown a first interest in the study of organizational path dependencies (e.g. Hutzschenreuther, Pedersen, and Volberda, 2007; Sydow, 2009; Manning and Sydow, 2011; Pajunen and Fang, 2013; Truschkin, Elbert, and Günter, 2014; Alscher and Brauer, 2015; Aaltonen, Ahola and Artto, 2017). Finally, the numerous studies with a focus on *economic geography* deserve to be mentioned (e.g. Martin and Simmie, 2008; Simmie, 2012; Dawley, 2014; Dawley, MacKinnon, Cumbers and Pike, 2015; Isaksen, 2015; Binz, Truffer, and Cohen, 2016; Jing and Benner, 2016; Simmie, Sternberg, and Carpenter, 2014; Isaksen and Trippel, 2017; Chlebna and Simmie, 2018; Steen and Hansen, 2018). Interestingly, even scholars interested identifying and solving unfamiliar problems ad hoc (Ritala, Heiman, and Hurmelinna-Laukkanen, 2016), refer extensively to path-dependent properties (in this case: of dynamic capabilities; see also Verge and Durand, 2011), in order to clarify the non-path-dependent character of such processes. Last but not least, and long overdue, *economics* has restarted reflecting its status as a path-dependent discipline (Yalcintas, 2016)

This type of research, even if applied to business and management, can be traced back to David's (1985) and Arthur's (1989) conception of technological path dependence, which emphasizes the importance of self-reinforcing processes that are triggered by (small) events leading to a (potential) lock-in and occurring mainly behind the backs of agents. In contrast,

the more recent approach of Garud and Karnøe (2001) calls for a more explicit conceptualization of (multiple) actor(s) who are thought of as intentionally influencing the path's trajectory (see also Bothello and Salles-Djelic, 2018). Though both approaches are obviously related to one another, they are usually dealt with separately. What is more, previous studies, that tried to integrate these different views at least to some extent, have turned to the organizational realm (e.g., Sydow et al., 2009, 2012) and thus improved our understanding of paths in settings other than the technological.

Unsurprisingly, an increased number of studies turn towards the question of how and under which conditions a technological, institutional or organizational can be broken (e.g. Sydow and Koll, 2017).

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* As of August 2018. See for more complete information the Path Community Newsletters at http://www.wiwiss.fu-berlin.de/forschung/pfadkolleg/_NEU_Organisation/Newsletter/index.html