

EIASM Workshop, 3-4 November 2006, Free University of Berlin

Organizing Paths – Paths of Organizing

Workshop Organizers:

Peter Karnøe, Copenhagen Business School

Guido Möllering, Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies, Cologne

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Call for Papers:

With this workshop we aim to bring together researchers from all over the world who apply the concept of 'path' in studying social processes and phenomena in a broad range of disciplines, settings and topics. By exchanging the latest ideas and findings in this two-day forum, it will be possible to demonstrate common ground and collective advances as well as self-critical reflection and unresolved problems.

Starting out as a rather specialist challenge to orthodox neoclassical economics, the concept of path dependence has become by now one of the most inspiring and versatile explanations for the self-reinforcing continuation of social, technological and economic phenomena that resist change even when outcomes are considered suboptimal. Meanwhile, the concept of path dependence has been challenged itself, not only by economists who reject it, but more importantly by social scientists who criticize the marginalization of agency in path dependence. The new concept of path creation captures the idea that actors can also seek to influence paths through mindful deviation and the generation of momentum. Overall, path constitution could be rather emergent or mindfully produced in the different phases of path generation, continuation and termination.

From the perspective of management, but also from policy making in general, research on paths stimulates renewed interest and original explanations with regard to one of the fundamental questions of modernity: Can we be entrepreneurs of our own fate (voluntarism) or are we subject to inevitable forces (determinism)? Framing this question in terms of paths requires more than metaphorical discourse. In order to truly advance our understanding, sound theory and empirical investigations are called for.

We invite the submission of extended abstracts for conceptual and/or empirical papers without any restriction as to the theories or methodologies applied. We imagine that besides participants who have been engaged in 'path' discourses before, others may have only recently started to apply the concept seriously, coming from research on institutional theory, structuration theory, actor network theory, theories of organizational change, marketing, innovation, product development, entrepreneurship, group dynamics and so on.

One focus of this workshop is indicated by the title 'Organizing Paths – Paths of Organizing'. It draws attention to the organizational aspect of paths. On the one hand, paths are organized. Whenever we suspect that an institution, a technology, a market, an industry, a cluster, an

organization or a group of people possesses the features of a path, we can ask how this path is organized, i.e. how different mechanisms play together and what kind of influences have an effect on the path. On the other hand, particular forms of organizing, such as bureaucracy or industrial districts, may be seen as paths, too, and this may explain how organizations work internally and interact within their organizational fields. We speak of *organizing* to suggest that paths are more or less reflexive processes maintained by social practices over time, thereby also acknowledging contingency and the potential for path creation.

Abstracts should be 1,000 words long, specifying their theoretical foundations, original contributions and concrete areas of application. Full papers will be required in time for the workshop. Within management, we expect submissions from organization theory, organizational behaviour, strategic management, marketing, innovation and entrepreneurship. Beyond management, we explicitly welcome contributions from economists, sociologists, historians and political scientists. In sum, any serious research on ‘paths’ could be relevant to this workshop.

This EIASM Workshop is organized in collaboration with the Doctoral Program “Research on Organizational Paths” at the Free University of Berlin (www.pfadkolleg.de).

Deadlines:

Submission of abstracts	15 July 2006
Notification of authors	31 July 2006
Uploading full papers	30 September 2006