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Christiansen, John K.; Birkinshaw, Julian; Le Masson, Pascal; Makinen, Saku

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Experiments in an Organisational Context

Christiansen, J.¹, Birkinshaw, J.², Le Masson, P.³, Mäkinen, S.J.⁴

¹Copenhagen Business School, Denmark; ²London Business School, UK, ³MINES ParisTech - PSL Research University, France, ⁴Tampere University of Technology/CERN, Finland/Switzerland
Corresponding author: saku.makinen@tut.fi

Originally the special issue editors agreed that using experiments, and fostering a culture of experimentation in organisations, was a noble quest that should be further explored and analysed. After receiving multiple submissions and having more or less intensive dialogues with colleagues, we were reassured of the value of promoting a call for papers addressing Experiments in an Organisational Context. We were also happy to see how the papers developed during the process and became full manuscripts that are now published with this special issue.

The special issue has a broad diversity of papers. "Generative action and preference reversal in exploratory project management" draws the attention towards alternative decision-making approaches in situations with high levels of uncertainty and ambiguity about the future. Another paper, "Making sense of failure to support experimental innovation," shows how an apparently project failure can be re-framed and considered from another perspective, as an experiment to learn from and, in this way, shift from a negative to a positive experience for the organization. "Assessing the usefulness of an early idea development tool among experienced researchers" describes the development of a tool to facilitate the generation of new ideas among researchers; the authors test the tool on a sample of researchers from both the public section and the business community, and offer some interesting results and avenues for further experimental research. Another paper, "Extending lab results to advices for leadership facilitating creativity in organizations," has an interesting approach, as it not only tries to expand laboratory observation to leadership advice, but also builds on the idea that employees engaged in innovation activities in some situations needs to be "de-fixed" from their present working mode and thinking, while in other situations they should be encouraged to continue whatever route they are on.

Both public and private organizations can apparently engage in experiments and benefit from them. One paper, "Experimenting with innovation processes: the case of reinventing a museum through collaboration," describes the case of a museum that undertook a two-year process to improve its collaboration and innovative capabilities. Another paper, "Organizational experiments and the change of meaning," reflects on the

change process initiated by the CEO of a private company to make it more flexible and innovative by removing most of the prior formal structure, and thereby changing the meaning of management in the company. Going quickly through these results one can only be impressed by the fact that novel research methods based on experiments often lead to very original results.

Looking at the list of final contribution in this special issue, one recognizes that a couple of the papers deal with experiments as related to "projects" in some form, a couple of papers are concerned with the use of experiments to improve leadership and innovative behaviour, while the latter two papers focus on the application and analysis of experiments at an organizational level.

Taken as a whole, the papers underline the rich and complex epistemology of experimenting in organization science. Of course, the authors acknowledge that the organizational situation makes it difficult, or even impossible, to control the whole range of parameters that may play a critical role in shaping outcomes. But they also all show that it doesn't prevent the use of experimental methods in organization science, as was already known in action research and collaborative research epistemology (Shani et al., 2007).

This special issue helps to shed new light on a large variety of methods, such as a method to learn from experiments driven by a company itself (see "Organizational experiments and the change of meaning") or a method to extend results from lab experiments to organizational situations ("Extending lab results to advices for leadership facilitating creativity in organizations"). The papers illustrate how management science is able to articulate theoretical construction and empirical research through a variety of experimental approaches, and they attest to the scientific rigor and vitality of our scientific community. Furthermore, all the papers show how the experimental research in management research could be further conducted in environments such as IdeaSquare@CERN to improve understanding of managing and leading organisations. The collection of papers also underlines the point that organization science is an experimental science, both in the sense that it creates new knowledge based on experimentation, and also in the sense that organizations

regularly experiment with new forms of collective actions.

Special Issue editors

Christiansen, J., Copenhagen Business School;
Birkinshaw, J., London Business School; Le Masson,
P. MINES ParisTech - PSL Research University;
Mäkinen, S.J. Tampere University of Technology/CERN

*Further information in case of questions concerning the
Special Issue, please contact:*

John Christiansen, Guest Editor,
(jc.om@cbs.dk); Julian Birkinshaw, co-guest editor
(jbirkinshaw@london.edu); Pascal Le Masson, co-
guest editor (pascal.le_masson@mines-paristech.fr);
Saku Mäkinen, editor in chief, CIJ
(saku.makinen@cern.ch); Valeria Brancolini,
managing editor, CIJ (valeria.brancolini@cern.ch)

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