

**Call for Chapter Proposals
Deadline: 15 February, 2017**

Organizing (for) the Future. How Organizations Manage Things to Come

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Overview

In contemporary societies, the temporal mode of the future is becoming more and more prevalent. At the latest since post-modernity and the widely stated increase in uncertainties, the future has become a problem for different social actors, especially for organizations (Koch, Krämer, Reckwitz, & Wenzel, 2016; Tsoukas & Shepherd, 2004): the post-modern insight that the future—as a period that lies ahead—is unknowable has clarified the general fallibility of managing and controlling the future (March, 1995; Mintzberg, 1994), thus making especially planning-focused organizations rethink the way they deal with things to come. Therefore, the question of how to handle the future has become an inherent part of organizing. As Luhmann (2000) suggests, organizations of any kind in all areas of commercial, federal, and daily life—from large corporations to public administrations to sports clubs—can be considered as structural responses to the question of how to cope with and handle an unknowable future. Beckert (2016), in turn, highlights that these very responses drive contemporary actions and trigger organizational, market, and societal developments. This indicates a tight interplay of future and organizing in which the future acts as both a driver and a performative result of organizing and clarifies that “the future matters just as much as history matters” (Beckert, 2016, p. 58).

Yet, despite the important role of the future, organization research has predominantly focused on the temporal mode of the past in processes of organizing. The widespread use of theories and concepts like path dependence (Sydow, Schreyögg, & Koch, 2009), imprinting (Stinchcombe, 1965), escalation of commitment (Staw, 1981), and inertia (Hannan & Freeman, 1984) reflect the profound interest in the historical development of organizations (Kipping & Üsdiken, 2014). In light of unpredictable (future) events and the related need for flexible organizational responses, these works declare the stabilizing effect of past developments as a problem for organizations. Thereby, organization scholars tend to accept the future as given, i.e., as “a separate entity” (Tsoukas & Sheperd, 2004, p. 10) that organizations can passively sense and forecast through “accurate” planning techniques at best. Such a passive approach toward the future is reflected in many contemporary concepts and streams in organization research, such as in controlling and goal-setting concepts (Ordóñez, Schweitzer, Galinsky, & Bazerman, 2009), the “dynamic capabilities” approach (Teece, 2007), neo-institutionalism (Meyer & Rowan, 1977), and even in parts of the entrepreneurship literature (Brinckmann & Sung, 2015). Thus, overall, organization research has paid less attention to the crucial role that the temporal mode of the future plays in processes of organizing.

Objective

This edited collection aims to draw attention to the tight interplay of future and organizing. For this purpose, we invite both conceptual and empirical contributions that appraise the significance of organizing (for) the future, discuss methodological and theoretical perspectives on the interplay of future and organizing, and/or present empirical insights on this interplay. To embrace the multifaceted nature of the interplay of future and organizing, we welcome submissions from different streams and disciplines and are open to all kinds of methodologies. Some of the questions that proposed chapters could address are:

Problematizing the future

- Which organizational and societal developments have made the future become more salient in contemporary organizations?
- In which ways have organizational responses to an unknowable future changed over time?
- How does the future and dealing with it become prevalent in contemporary processes of organizing?
- What does the “future of organizing” look like?

(Meta-)theoretical perspectives

- How can organization scholars conceptualize and operationalize “future” as a theoretical construct?
- How can the interplay of future and organizing be understood from different meta-theoretical stances (e.g., process philosophy, systems theory, practice theory, norm theory)?
- In which ways do different meta-theoretical perspectives enable and constrain a better understanding of the interplay of future and organizing?
- How do related theoretical ideas and epistemic concepts (e.g., foresight) inform our understanding of the interplay of future and organizing?

Methodological perspectives

- How can organization scholars empirically examine the interplay of future and organizing?
- In which ways do established methods enable and constrain the empirical examination of the interplay of future and organizing? Are there any preferred “future methods”?
- What kinds of new or less traditional methods might be needed to empirically examine this interplay?

Empirical insights

- Which processes, practices, discourses, and material objects do organizational actors use to handle the future?
- How do organizations performatively evoke the future?
- How do organizations conceptualize the future, e.g., as something threatening or as something full of hope? What role do such imaginations of the future play in processes of organizing? How do imaginations of the future become salient? How are they materialized?
- How do organizations prepare themselves for the things to come?
- Are there different organizational futures and how do they relate to each other?

Submission Process

Scholars are invited to submit a chapter proposal of 2 pages that provides an overview of the proposed chapter.

Deadline for chapter proposals: 15 February, 2017.

Proposals should be submitted by email to the editors: kraemer@europa-uni.de and mwenzel@europa-uni.de

Authors will be notified about the status of their proposal within four weeks; authors of accepted proposals will receive instructions and guidelines for the submission of full chapters. Full chapters will be reviewed based on a double-blind review process; contributors may be asked to serve as reviewers. The edited collection is planned to be published with Palgrave Macmillan in Q1 of 2018.

For inquiries related to the topic or the submission process of the edited collection, please contact the editors at the above email addresses.

Cited Literature

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